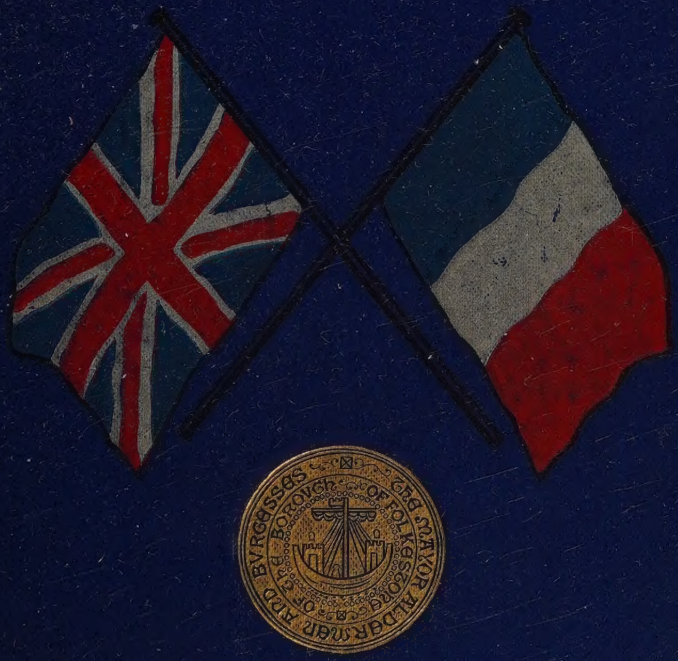
A ROMANCE OF OLD FOLKESTONE



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A ROMANCE OF OLD FOLKESTONE
By FRANCES MARSH.
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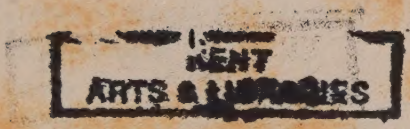

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CHAPTER I

THE FUNERAL

All that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

—Hamlet.

THE street, though crowded, was silent, but for the church bell which clanged solemnly and sadly its announcement that on that day a brother or a sister was to be consigned to his or her last home. Interest, not grief, was on every face. Not a point of vantage was unoccupied; windows, even roofs, were thick with human beings of every age and condition of society. A murmur which broke occasionally from the crowd on the arrival of yet another carriage with its armorial emblazonments, told those less fortunate in position, or less well-informed, the name of its owner, and respectful sympathy was shown to many of the new-comers, and their relationship to the deceased commented on. Mothers held their children firmly by the hand, and fathers were seen (though the sun was hot, and the August morning sultry) clasping in their arms little girls who seemed quite six or seven years of age, and capable of taking care of themselves. The crowd noticed these fathers, and addressed many a kind word to them, for politics were forgotten; for the time being all were one, and representatives of every political party in France were there, though the function was to be one of the greatest reunions of legitimists that France had witnessed since the flight of Charles X.

A group of staff officers surrounding the Préfet represented Imperial France, and a murmur went through the spectators that he was the bearer of a *couronne* from the Empress herself.

If there was a shade of coldness anywhere it was

shown to the known Republicans; they even seemed to feel their position and to deprecate by deploring gestures any hand their ancestors might have had in causing the pathos of the scene they were about to witness. Servants in the liveries of the oldest families in France mixed with the crowd and added fresh news of stables over-crowded and horses tethered in the Park; of guests expected from long distances; of the time the procession would take in passing, and the limitation of accommodation in the little church, in which only representatives of the noblesse of France could even hope for standing room.

A little girl clung to her father's neck and cried, "Father, if you lost me you would find me?" and the father answered, "Ah! those were fearful times when innocent babes were made to suffer!" And the Republicans near looked down, for everything that was tender in the hearts of Frenchmen had been stirred by the return of this child of France—a child no longer it is true in years, but who would be to them a child for ever.

The windows of the *Golden Fleece*, a worn and picturesque old building of the time of Louis XIV, were still unoccupied; but the crowd knew that they were engaged, and that not a room there was vacant, and that cooks and scullions were working from morning to night to satisfy the hungry hordes of visitors that had been unable to find accommodation in the Châteaux of the neighbourhood.

The proprietor, dressed in irreproachable evening dress, was never free from inquiring new-comers, and at each narration of his personal participation in the events of the past week he wrung his fat hands and looked to Heaven, as if to invoke Divine aid. After thus relieving his feelings he terminated his story with, "It is plainly to be seen, Madame la Marquise, or Monsieur le Baron," as the case might be, "that le bon Dieu wished our child to return at last to her own, and to be received back into the sacred fold of our blessed religion; for certainly, while under the care of the brave English, mademoiselle must have worshipped in the Protestant faith. Hélas! no first communion, no any-

thing! But the Bishop has arranged all that," cried the enthusiastic host; "she is received back into the bosom of her Church, her family, and her native land; thank God for that!" He would then take his little circle of listeners to a small table, on which under a glass case was a toy, an old-fashioned looking dog, with the marks of a child's teeth plainly visible on it; beside this toy lay a pair of white kid gloves, with bands of black velvet sewn round the wrists—gloves which showed a faint impression of very beautiful hands; small long, aristocratic hands, with taper fingers. Very modern these gloves, for they had been worn by their owner only a week previously, and left in her room on the morning of the great recognition. Here the worthy man told of his presentiment; and how through the absence of the head waiter he had himself waited on the new arrivals; and his feeling that the old English lady was not a stranger to him, and that her features seemed strangely familiar; her voice, too, and laugh (for she had very been merry) had reminded him of other well-known voices. "But, Messieurs et Mesdames, I had no thought of her being the sister of Monsieur le Duc when she could not speak a word of French. But with my own eyes I saw her go into the Park by the private entrance as though she had used it all her life." More would doubtless have followed, for the host of the *Golden Fleece* had an audience quite to his taste; but the noise of wheels caused him to terminate his story, and with a hasty "Pardon me, as I must receive the children," he left his sympathetic audience with a promise to return later on.

"You will join us at dessert?" said an elderly gentleman.

"You do me too much honour, Monsieur le Marquis, but your requests are to me commands," answered the old Frenchman.

The gentleman thus addressed turned hastily, and removing the glass shade bent down and kissed a white glove, then with a sigh excused himself for so doing by an apologetic "We played together as children; and, had times been different, my name, not the English-

man's, would have been upon her coffin." Then he, too, went into the entrance and faced the crowd.

A large brake had driven up, with out-riders and grooms in puce-coloured liveries embossed in silver, the only sign of mourning being the black bands worn on the arms. This was the gala livery of the Duc de Verminoux, one of the wealthiest nobles in France and of historic parentage, for in his veins was royal blood, not only of St. Louis, but of kings nearer the present century. As brave as he was loyal, as virtuous as he was patriotic —for these sterling qualities he and his had been spared many of the horrors of the French Revolution; for, though his mother, the Duchesse, had lost her life, and a child sister had been supposed to share her fate, the estates and worldly possessions of the Ducs de Verminoux had suffered less than those of any other family of its standing in France. Perhaps much of his good fortune was owing to the love which the lost child had inspired; to the constant devotion of the Duc to her memory, and to the cult that had been paid her by her foster brothers; for two of these brothers had won laurels under the great Napoleon, one of them, a Marshal of France, having died only a few weeks previous to the date on which our story begins.

So the crowd looked with interest at the carriage and its occupants; they were all young children, heirs to great names, whose parents thought that they should be present to honour this lost child of France, but who were too young to follow in the procession. The last to be lifted out were a boy and girl, and to those children it was easily seen that the crowd gave all its sympathy. The boy might have been seven years old, while the girl, a lovely little creature, seemed not more than four. The onlookers murmured—"The great-grandchildren of Monsieur le Duc, who arrived last evening from Paris!"

A slight pressure brought the crowd nearer the carriage and the hotel steps; on this the boy changed colour, and grasping his little sister by the shoulder with his left hand, flashed from his right-hand pocket a tiny toy sword, and turned and faced the crowd. "Ah, my

jewels!" cried a woman near; "we do not wonder that you fear; but all is changed now. If we could undo that dreadful past we would." But the gentleman whom the host had addressed as "Monsieur le Marquis" gently took the sword from the boy and whispered something in his ear, something that turned the little cheek as bright a red as it had previously turned pale; and when the top step was reached he again faced the crowd, and then he was bareheaded, and a child's clear voice was distinctly heard, saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, I offer you my excuses, and thank you for being here to honour my great-aunt." Then the crowd forgot all but the present and the pretty children; and with "Vive Monsieur le Vicomte," the little ones disappeared for a few minutes, to reappear with their companions in the hitherto empty windows.

The bell still tolled out its sad message, and in the distance, round the church, the clergy with their vestments added another interest to the onlookers. The local Bishop was recognized; a murmur of the Nuncio was plainly heard; then a gentleman stood bareheaded, for he in his turn had received a friendly salutation from no less a dignitary than the great Bishop of Orleans, Pardeloup himself. For, as the landlord had said, the Church, as well as the great House of Verminoux, welcomed back a lost daughter.

A moment after, all heads were bared, for the principal Park gates were thrown open and the procession was seen crossing the boundary. Something white scintillated in the bright sunshine, carried on the shoulders of stalwart men (every one of them Bonapartists too, was the verdict of the crowd); for, by her express desire, the descendants of her old nurse were to carry to her last resting-place the old lady who had so strangely returned to the home of her youth.

The officers surrounded the Préfet, who moved to his place in front of them with the Empress's wreath in his hand. Perfect silence reigned everywhere. Now and again the song of a bird was heard, and nearer and nearer came the procession. As it got nearer, the crowd, from a bird's-eye view, might have been composed of children,

for every child among it was lifted high above the adults, for it was to them a child's funeral, the end of a sad story that they would themselves tell their children's children, and so unto all time. As the coffin passed before the hotel the child inmates all stood up, the little boys saluting. Then the crowd became aware that the white scintillation of the pall was nothing less than the gold fleur-de-lis that powdered the white satin of the old national flag of France, which in artistic folds glorified the coffin. A small Union Jack was attached to the only wreath then upon it, placed there by the English Ambassador to notify that the dead woman was a British subject, and the widow of one of England's bravest Admirals. He did not know, they none of them knew, thought the onlookers. But the coffin passed on, and the mourners were the principal attraction. They walked five abreast, the principal mourner being no less a personage than the legitimate king of France, Henry V—commonly called the Comte de Chambord—a kind, gentle looking man, one who would never plunge his country into bloodshed that his rights might be asserted, though ready to take his part should the nation demand his presence. On his right, erect, and carrying manfully his eighty-six years, was the Duc de Verminoux, and by his side a lady no longer young, or even with traces of past beauty, though she resembled, in a coarser type, her companion. She was Madame Giraud, the daughter of the woman whom France was honouring, who, though the daughter of France's noblest, was a British subject; while she, the daughter of the English Admiral, had, by her marriage with a French manufacturer, become a Frenchwoman.

The crowd was tender in the mute sympathy it expressed, by looks only, to this broken-hearted daughter, for it knew that during the last few days of her mother's life her very existence had been forgotten by that mother, and her presence banished from her room. On the left of His Royal Highness were the Marquis de Breuil, the Duc's only son, and Monsieur Giraud; and then came the bearers, or their representatives, of nearly every illustrious French name.

"It was well that the Bellais should carry her, for then they could walk first," was the verdict of the crowd. For at least sixty-six years of her life she owed to the devotion of one of their family, and the brave Marshal loved her to the last; and, of her own, only her brother remained who had loved her as a child, save Mère Bellais, who, despite her ninety-six years, was awaiting her nursling in the church—a rare old dame indeed, who would now rest in peace when her time came, happy in the knowledge that her heart's darling lay beside her father near her old home.

On passing the Mairie, the procession halted, while the Préfet, the Commandant and the Staff saluted, and the former placed on the coffin the Empress's wreath of white lilies surrounding a heart of deep purple violets. A cheer burst from the crowd at this thoughtful tribute both to the de Verminoux and Bellais families. Then the white shining mass moved on, and was seen shortly after to disappear within the portals of the village church —to remain there for ever.

The old Duc and his Protestant niece clasped hands as they crossed the threshold, and the latter looked almost with fear at the quaint figure which sat on one side of the catafalque upon which the coffin rested, a figure that might have walked out of a picture frame, so picturesque was it. For, as she had closed her darling's eyes for ever, sleeping peacefully on the brave breast that had nourished her, back once more on the heart that had never ceased to hunger for her, so the old nurse (the mother of a Marshal of France, and of one of her bravest generals) appeared at that nursling's funeral dressed as when in the service of the Duchesse de Verminoux, when they all three, mother, nurse and baby, had been one of the sights of Versailles or the Tuileries Gardens. The puce-coloured brocade dress, embossed with white silver, was spread over enormous hoops, with a costly lace apron and a high standing cap. Hanging from a gold chain on her right side was a child's rattle—one of the historical treasures of the de Verminoux family, for it was the gift of a queen. Thus dressed, Madame Bellais sat surrounded by her descendants, by the side of the

darling of her youth. She would not look at that child's daughter, and Catherine Giraud felt in her heart that though she had been welcomed by her uncle and his descendants, yet that Marie Bellais, the aristocratic nourrice of the old régime, prouder than her employers, a mother that only tolerated her distinguished sons, would never acknowledge the daughter of the Englishman who had not been a noble.

The mournful music and impressive service had commenced. No village choir sang the office, for professional singers had asked as a favour to be permitted to give their services. To Catherine Giraud all seemed a dream, in which the figure of the old nurse was the bad fairy—a fairy that was to keep her for ever from her mother, and who would prevent that mother from recognizing her even in Heaven. She recalled that dreadful last evening when the old woman with flashing eyes had driven her from her mother's room with angry push and haughty words—"You are nothing! Our child was deceived and taken from us—who are you?"

But the profound silence and the majestic rendering of the *Dies irae* brought her back to the doleful present and the vacant feeling of irreparable loss, for until then she and her mother had been one. But even the direst moments cannot last for ever; she saw the coffin again asperged, the white flag of legitimist France removed, the red velvet coffin once more hoisted on the shoulders of the grandsons of the old nurse, and by them shortly after deposited on an incline, from whence it gradually disappeared into the vault beneath. Then a short and poetical oration on the incidents of the dead woman's life was given by the great Bishop, and all was over.

The noise of wheels was heard, and after what seemed hours of anguish at the church door where the principal mourners received the condolences of the invited guests, they at last left the church and were rapidly driven back to the Château. Then a file of respectful compatriots passed without intermission into the vault until night, when orders were given that the church doors were to be shut, but with a message from the Duc that the vault would not be closed the next day, in order that those

who had not yet paid their tribute of love should be able to do so.

But those who had already visited the vault told all that they had seen, and the inscriptions on the coffin and on the wreaths that lay on it. They were as follows :—

" Catherine Woodruff, wife of Admiral Sir John Woodruff, R.N., K.C.B., of Folkestone, Kent. Born Gabrielle Marie Antoinette de Verminoux. The only daughter of Louis XII, Duc de Verminoux and Louise de Vaux his wife ; God-daughter of H.M. Queen Marie Antoinette ; Playmate of T.R.H. the Children of France. Born May 7th, 1784, died on the festival of the B.V., 1858, fortified by the rites of her religion." On the Empress's wreath, and written by Her Majesty—" To the God-daughter of a Queen. Enfin chez vous " (At last at home). On the English wreath—" With sympathy and much regret."

That evening, both at Châteaux and cottages, it was the same story—" Tell me, father, tell me all about this dear little lost girl ! " And in all these homes the little ones were more warmly kissed when good-nights were said ; and in their dreams children wandered into far and unknown countries, to wake crying, but to find themselves safe—not only at home, but in a peaceful land.

And the story of the lost Gabrielle will be an everlasting story that, with never failing interest, will delight with mingled tears and laughter the children of her native land.

CHAPTER II

WAS THERE TREACHERY?

God's goodness has been great.
—2 *Henry VI*, ii. 1.

THE royal guest had departed, and, with the exception of the immediate family, the Château was empty. After the excitement of the past fortnight the gloom and silence were most depressing; for a series of festivals had been organized for the entertainment of the royal visitor, whose visit had been lengthened in order that he might represent his race at the funeral of his great-aunt's god-daughter.

It was at the last of these entertainments that his host's lost sister had so dramatically returned, but the verdict of the doctors summoned by the Duc, had been so decisive that he at once notified his intention to remain until the end, by this exquisite act of courtesy giving more comfort and satisfaction to the venerable Duc than any other consideration or consolation on his part could have done. And he had been the first to understand, the first to call her by her old name; and, as he bade farewell to his old friend, the constant reverberation in his mind had not been agreeable to one who yet hoped "by the will of God and of his countrymen" to occupy the throne of St. Louis. And that refrain had been, or seemed to be, strangely prophetic to the legitimate king of France:—"For former things have passed away—for former things have passed away." "Let me hope on," he thought, "and when the day dawns for my return, let that day bring in with the white flag of old France, a King, who, under Divine guidance, will do his best."

So it had been a sorrowful farewell; and when the

old Duc had retired to his library, his faithful valet had ordered a fire to be lighted there, for the old are ever chilly after sunset, and near it had placed his master's chair. On an easel beside it was an unfinished picture, the portrait of his sister, which was being painted at his request by Baudry, who had been sent for in order that the family might have some artistic and vivid representation of her as she had been during the last few days of her life. And the great artist had excelled himself, for not only was the likeness marvellous, but the veriest child, looking at the old lady with the grey curls, lovely eyes, and soft blooming complexion, would understand that from those beautiful eyes the soul of a child looked out. As a study of psychology it was unerring—an aged face with the spirit of youth. The artist had seen her as a child once more, and so he had painted her with the toys of her childhood, by the side of that wondrous old dame, her former nurse.

The quiet of the room and the warmth of the fire soothed the Duc, and his head drooped upon his chest; and then he forgot all the sorrows of his life, and with mother, nurse and little sister played once more in the gardens of the Tuileries. The sun shone as it never seems to do but to children; the May breezes fanned his cheeks; his mother's voice called "Lulu, remember your blue velvet coat, and that you will soon be a man, not a child, and should show Gabrielle wisdom." And he looked so lovingly at his mother; though he felt his hair being ruffled by the wind, not a hair of hers moved. "How young she is, and how lovely," he thought, and she seemed to be getting nearer to him, intenser in colour; he could almost feel her by him and smell the fragrant marichal, with which her hair was powdered. She seemed to call "Louis, Louis, come to me!" But the hand of Marie Bellais, the tyrant of those nursery days, and his mother's faithful, but severe mentor, came between them with a dictatorial "Madame, he has yet much to do for our child," and then he woke—to find Marie sitting by his side in the old costume, with her hand upon the cushion of his chair. If the Duc felt old, the woman who was twelve years his senior did not;

intense vigour was written in her face, and she looked ten years younger than she had done a week previously.

She watched her old mistress's son suspiciously. He was no nursling of hers, for there had been twelve years' difference in the ages of the Duchesse's children; but for all that he was hers, hers by the right of love and brotherhood to the only girl child who had rested on her brave but cantankerous heart. The mother of seven sons, she held her head high above all women, and men too, the seven sons among them; for Marshals of France or privates had to acknowledge that their commander-in-chief was their mother. She feared no foe, and had braved the furies of the Terror, and the woman-wolves of that time, with gibes fiercer than they could answer, and insults at their childlessness or the inferiority of their offspring. And so she had saved her own; but unaware of her great powers, she had trusted the child of her heart to her uncle-in-law, not deeming herself strong or wily enough to save that darling! Oh, that fault of hers, that under-rating of her powers of repartee or the devildom of her flashing eyes, when with ready wit she discomfited her abominable female persecutors, and won the wild admiration of the men whom those women were hounding on to kill her and her children! And their verdict—"Go, mother of Frenchmen, go! You have given to your land; what have these women done but drag men down to hell!"

But if she had saved her own, what about the only child her heart had ever idolized? For both the Duchesse's child and the old manservant, her uncle, were never heard of again. Oblivion had opened its arms and enveloped both, though for years the brave woman had searched; and during the celebrated interview, when the great Emperor himself visited her to thank her in person for the heroism of her sons, two of whom had given their lives for his on the field of Austerlitz—then, when dressed in the livery of the de Verminoux, Marie Bellais had received in her old farmhouse the Conqueror of Europe, it had not been of her heroic sons that the handsome mother had spoken, but with tears in her eyes she had pleaded for help in the search from the usurper;

and that help had been given—the very best that could be given—but with, alas, no result! For Napoleon's verdict had been this—"Had France more mothers such as this one, the world would be hers."

And now the old woman of ninety-six had but one view of the dénoûment of this tragedy—"Treachery, treachery! Some one in far England had hidden the truth, had destroyed proofs, had ruined her darling's life," and the old aristocratic nurse wrung her hands over the loss of that child's position in society.

The Duc placed his hand on that of his old friend's, and said, "Marie, I was with them both, and you too were there, in my dream, and mother looked so young and beautiful; she was near me, and I smelt the old perfume, and she called me, 'Lulu,' but you held me back!"

"And so I do, Monseigneur," answered the old woman. "This is not the time for you or me to say farewell. We have to discover how our child was treated in that barbarous land, and why she gave no sign; for you must remember that both Pierre and Mademoiselle could write, and we know now that they both lived and reached England in safety. There must be treachery somewhere; for whoever gave them hospitality must have imprisoned them, otherwise, when the Terror was over we should have heard from them—or of them. They could not have passed unnoticed, for my child was a Princess among princesses, and, Monseigneur, you know that she remembered all—all. Ah! vengeance, vengeance I will have! I cry for vengeance!"

"Calm yourself, Marie," said the Duc, "there must be something, I admit, in what you say, and we will—you and I—" (here he again pressed the withered hand) "endeavour to unravel the sad mystery. But, Marie, for my sake, do not insult our darling's daughter, or her husband, for both are innocent. The only one, perhaps, we may find guilty is my sister's husband. But then," added the old diplomatist, "he could only have been a boy in '92. "No," he said firmly, "treachery, if treachery there was, must have been committed by my niece's grandfather! Well, we will do our best, and now, beloved old friend, dear to me by every association

of my youth, go to your home ; perhaps to-morrow I may have more to tell you. Until then, *au revoir*."

Saying this, he got up and, taking Marie's hand with the courtesy of old France, led her (as his father might have done his queen) to the door. General Bellais was awaiting his mother in the ante-chamber, and with kind salutations the old friends of a past gone beyond recall kissed one another good-night.

Disdaining her son's arm, and hardly leaning on her stick, Madame Bellais passed through the ante-chamber ; then, regardless of her son's "Mother, the carriage is waiting," turned to the left of the corridor, and joined the house-party in the central hall or lounge. The Girauds were not present, and their absence was at once noted by the irate old lady. Every one rose as she entered and gathered round the family friend, tender in their sympathy ; but so fierce a light burned in the still flashing black eyes that the young wife of the Comte de Breuil, to avoid further irritation, and to divert the attention of the old nurse, retired hurriedly and unnoticed, shortly returning with her little daughter in her arms.

The child had been awakened by this manœuvre ; and this modern practice of disturbing the rest of children called forth much wrath from the old lady—in fact, no one would have ventured on such a breach of nursery etiquette but Léonie de Verminoux ; for she was the reigning favourite, the mother of the children, Louis and Gabrielle, and was not this Gabrielle the living image of her own nursling ? So, when mollified, the old lady enthroned herself in an armchair and, taking the child from her mother, looked steadfastly into vacancy. But dreams did not come to comfort her, notwithstanding the presence of the little form on her knees, the sight of the golden hair, and the soft stroking of the baby hands on her own. From generation to generation Nou Nou Marie had been adored by every de Verminoux child, and her name the first to be rendered intelligible from their lips—her name that turned turmoil into calm in nursery squabbles, ranking with grandpapa and the Château, though she was the envied possessor of a far more agreeable Château of her own—the farm, where hens

and pigs disported themselves with callous indifference to the claims of education or fashion. So Gabrielle, with the insight given to some quite young children, and having felt a tear on her face, cried, "I am not going to bed again to-night in my nursery. I shall go with Nou Nou Marie to Mon Plaisir (the farm), for then Nou Nou will cry no longer." And this tender untaught sympathy broke down the barriers that fenced in the proud old heart, and surrounded by her old children and their wives, with Louis, the gallant little heir by her side, and his sister on her lap, the poor old nurse poured forth the grief of years for the Duc's mother, the pride of her heart, for her foster child, even for shock-headed Pierre (the Marshal of France) and two other sons, who had died on the field of honour—even they too were mourned.

They gathered very gently round the picturesque old woman, and would have been very tender to her, but with that sudden return to every-day sentiment, so noticeable in the old, she pulled herself together, and dried her eyes with the costly lace handkerchief that was held in its place at her waist by the broad puce-coloured ribbon that tied her apron. Then she unfastened the gold chain to which the rattle was attached, and gave it into the charge of the Marquis with—"I shall never put it on again; but I will take both children if the nurse is ready," and, without waiting for an answer, she got up from her chair and with unfaltering gait, the child still in her arms, walked to the principal entrance, where the Duc's own carriage was waiting for her.

"Poor father! poor Marie!" said the Marquis, "though theirs are grateful hearts to-night, they are very sad ones. I wonder, had I better join my father in the library?" He had hardly finished this when his father's valet entered with a message from the Duc, expressing his wish to see his son and Madame Giraud.

Shortly after, the Marquis and Catherine Giraud were sitting on either side of the lonely old man. After a few kind inquiries after her health, which were answered gently and sadly by the bereaved lady, the Duc, looking kindly into her face, said—"My dear, did you have no

idea that your mother was a Frenchwoman ? Did your father have no clue as to the parentage of the woman to whom he gave both his name and his affections ? For you have told me that on this earth no wife was more tenderly loved and honoured, or mother reverenced than your mother ; and that your father's only regret, when he said farewell on this earth to that wife, was that she had never expressed a wish."

Catherine Giraud's hands shook, and tears fell slowly down her cheeks. Then the Duc noticed a peculiarity of his own race that this unknown niece inherited from her grandmother (his mother)—the tears fell singly, and did not blemish her complexion or redden her eyes ; and he remembered his mother's tears, shed on the night when the Dauphin of France died (that happy child, so loved by angels that he was taken to dwell among them, and so spared the horrors of the Revolution). On leaving the royal apartments she had passed some of the cynical courtiers, and they had made jest of those tears—tears that left no disfiguring traces could not come from the heart, they argued. And he had been so angry, he remembered, so angry ; but that was all forgotten now.

This little link between the grandmother and her English grandchild went straight to the Duc's heart, so it was a very tender caress that he imprinted on her cheek. " She has my mother's complexion too," he thought. " Be unreserved with me, my child. Tell me what you were told as a child, when you asked the questions all children ask ? "

" Thank you so much, dear uncle," Catherine answered. " I can only tell you very little, and perhaps that little may not please you. What I know I will not hide ; though through life it was a sorrow to my father, and I never knew the secret myself until my father's last illness. Dear mamma," here she burst into tears, " was always considered in Folkestone to be the daughter of my grandfather's older and only brother, Admiral George Woodruff, and it was supposed that her mother was a French lady he had married secretly, and who was murdered on the 10th August, during the storming of the

Tuileries. The shock of hearing of my great-uncle's death, from an accident on board his ship, was supposed to have killed the old manservant, in whose charge he had sent my mother to my grandfather's home in Folkestone, for he was found dead in the butler's pantry an hour or so after being told the sad news. My dear mother, thus left in the hands of comparative strangers, was received at once into the family as a much-loved niece, and what her supposed father (the Admiral) left in worldly possessions was strictly settled upon her. She became at once the light of the home, and was from the first idolized by my father, who, as an only child (his little sister having died a year previously), welcomed with delight a childish companion. From her own bright stories no child could have been happier, though sometimes she would cry for hours without knowing why ; but then my father said that that was the result of some strange illness from which she nearly died, caused, he believed, by the same shock that killed the old manservant—who, I feel sure now, must have been Pierre Bellais. For weeks she was not expected to recover ; and when she did she could not speak a word of French, which had been evidently her native tongue. She seemed to have forgotten everything ; and, as my father said, became a happy, healthy, English child. That strange illness she was never told of ; the doctor forbade that it should be mentioned, as he feared a relapse did she hear of it—he would not answer for her reason.

" There has been treachery somewhere," continued the Admiral's daughter ; " treachery there has been, but not among mine, for my great-uncle and supposed grandfather was incapable of depriving a child for selfish motives of its birthright, and however honourable the position of my grandfather's family, it was simply of the upper middle class, and to the daughter of a Duke a sorry substitute for her own. But she never felt that loss, for, from the day that she was considered an orphan, she became the centre of a loving home, a centre in which all affections concentrated ; and to my father she became the star to lead him to all that was good and holy ; from the first day of their meeting (he was then

only fourteen years of age) until the day when he lay dying, his hand in hers, she had been his first and only love. I, though an only child, was loved as that loved one's child ; but I was such a faint, imperfect edition of that mother, a poor smeared copy of what was so beautiful and vivid in her, that I do not wonder that I hardly took a daughter's place in my father's heart. But to my mother it was otherwise. I was her all, her everything. I could do no wrong : even in my marriage to a Frenchman, which I shall *never* regret, as my husband has been all that is good and kind, and now is unhappy as he thinks his inferior position in society may prevent my taking my rank as your niece, for he does not wish—I do not wish—" her eyes now flashed with almost the pride of a de Verminoux, " in any way to claim relationship to my mother's family. My darling mother repudiated me on her deathbed ; it is true that the memory of her English existence had become a blank, and it is that very fact that makes me feel that I should only be an intruder among you. I represent the English life, the life she spent in the Woodruff family ; you represent her own people, from whom (there can be no doubt) my darling mother was unlawfully detained. Since last Wednesday I have had but one happy thought, one that I never could have imagined could have caused me gratitude—Thank God that I have no children ! With me will die out a connexion which is not of your rank.

" Please do not interrupt me," she cried. " I know you will say that I am dear to you for my mother's sake, but I rank now with my husband—a calico printer, as we say in England ! No ! as Catherine Woodruff I could have come among you—as the daughter and granddaughter of English Admirals, whose services were recognized by their country ; but my present rank is in so different a sphere from yours. A man can take his wife where he will, but the lot of a woman is to follow, if it be up or down the social scale.

" But during your lifetime, ' mon oncle,' may I hope that we shall meet and talk of Her together ? And my greatest wish is that in the unravelling of a mystery of so intense an interest to us both, we may act together, and

one day, soon, may together visit the old home at Folkestone, that home of hers for more than sixty years."

"My dear," said the Duc, "I will not argue with you this evening; but in the family of which I am the present head, you will be admitted, and your good husband too. I will send to-night for a detective from Paris, and his advice, conjoined with that of his English confrères, may give us some possible clue. You have no token of any description—locket, cross, or fleur-de-lis? Or have you heard anything peculiar about the costume in which your mother first appeared? I mention these details as the day my sister disappeared from her family she was most beautifully dressed, and Pierre Bellais was in our gala livery, puce velvet embossed with silver. Both, you see, must have been remarkable, and would be noticed wherever they went; and, in addition to the beauty of her costume, little Gabrielle wore round her neck, attached to a fine gold chain, a fleur-de-lis in diamonds, the gift of her godmother, our martyred queen."

"We have nothing," answered Madame Giraud—"nothing. Mamma was accepted, as I have before stated, as the daughter of our family hero, Admiral George Woodruff, and under such mysterious circumstances, the less said was considered the wiser; so no one asked any questions, delicacy of feeling deeming such curiosity likely to wound the feelings of his brother and sister-in-law, my grandparents."

"Yes, that is easily understood," said both listeners.

"But what about Admiral George?" said the Duc. "He must have known, and doubtless, had he lived, he would have restored our child to her own home, for I seem to remember his name in connexion with some long-forgotten festival at the British Embassy. Well, together we will do our best, and in time, no doubt, will discover something, however faint the traces may now seem. Well, to-morrow then, my dear," and, standing beside his niece, he bent and kissed first her hand and then her forehead.

With this Catherine Giraud rejoined her husband, and shortly after retired to rest—but not to sleep. In

her ears, too, rang the same refrain—" For former things have passed away," with the same mystic warning too; but, unlike the Comte de Chambord, Catherine Giraud knew the worst; she knew that in this life her mother had gone from her for ever; reunion could only be possible in the hereafter. " Perhaps, even then, she will not think I belong to her if she was retained in the Woodruff family by some fraud. Might she not resent it even in Heaven? No! No!" she cried out loud. " For former things will have passed away—all will be perfect there."

A night of sorrow brings sometimes a morning of consolation, and on waking late the next day, Madame Giraud felt hot tears falling upon her face. Looking up, she saw that Madame Bellais was bending over her bedside. " My child," she said, " can you forgive me? And will you take your mother's place in my heart, for I am very lonely? We know all now! Come quickly! Our loss was perhaps our darling's gain, for I love you for your father's sake. It was my dear master's fault. Come quickly—come, for we are waiting to tell you all!"

The writer does not claim for the following narrative other merit than that of throwing a little more light on a story that has been too long neglected. In it she has not only resuscitated in the setting of a memorable past, full of tragic and picturesque details, the adventures of the lost child; but has also feebly attempted to depict the contrast, then much more accentuated than at present, between the characteristics of the two races from which the heroes and heroines are taken, and has endeavoured in so doing to do justice to both great nations, who, for the universal benefit of mankind, should for ever march shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand.

CHAPTER III

THE PASSING OF GABRIELLE

God's benison go with you !
And with those
That would make good of bad,
And friends of foes !

A MURMUR of voices, which seemed to grow in volume as the minutes passed, caused Pierre Bellais' cheek to blanch as, holding his master's daughter by the hand, he looked cautiously out of the porte cochère of the Hotel de Verminoux. Bloodstains were on the lace ruffles which fell over his hands, the blood of that child's mother lying dead at the Tuileries, for they, the human wolves, were murdering every one there, and the gallant Swiss were fighting for the queen.

He, Pierre Bellais, had dashed up a secret staircase which led to the royal apartments, and had snatched Gabrielle de Verminoux from a corner where, with the children of France, the Dauphin, and Madame Royale, she had been crouching ; and, reckless of royal etiquette, had cried, " Her mother sends for her ! " and had fled away with the child.

By tortuous turnings he had reached the Hotel de Verminoux, and had stood flushed and panting before his niece-in-law, who, with her seven sons (two of them almost babies), was awaiting him.

" I place her in your hands, and never show your face to me again if you do not bring my child back to me ! " had thundered the angry woman, mad with grief, but not with fear. " I am only a woman, so I will take charge of these boys, who have doubtless nine lives, but my darling is too precious. Are you not named ' The Wily ? ' so could I make a better choice ? Do not

lose a moment, for I will not ask your plans ; do your best ! Not one thought of me ! I can take care of mine own ! "

And then he again took the frightened child's hand and watched his moment at the gate. Not a soul was in sight, and without another look behind him, Pierre Bellais and the daughter of the house crossed the threshold of those stately gates for ever.

The Hotel de Verminoux was situated at the city end of the rue St. Honoré, and the Revolutionists had passed it some time before, and were now in surging masses storming the Tuileries ; and to get to the River Seine before the possibility of their returning was the object of the cautious and faithful servant of the Duc de Verminoux. To an old sailor, boats and the ways of sea-faring men were no novelty, and he knew that politics did not interest the latter : that they were, so to say, a race apart, who, if given plenty of liquor and a handsome bribe, would run any strange cargo to its port.

So, crossing the street with the exquisitely dressed child by his side, Pierre walked as though escorting her to Mass at the neighbouring church of St. Roch. No one saw him, for the law-abiding citizens were hiding, and the lawbreakers were demolishing and murdering the bravest of the brave. After walking some distance he boldly entered the porte cochère of another mansion ; no gatekeeper was there, not a living creature could be seen. Opposite the porte cochère and across a handsome court was a door that gave access into another street, now the rue de Rivoli. The point at which they emerged faced the older portion of the Palace of the Louvre. Again the man hesitated, but the old maxim—" He who hesitates is lost "—came to his mind, and he walked through the gates and crossed without interrogation the immense quadrangle, and reached in safety the entrance facing the river, which to him represented a haven of safety.

The child during this hurried walk had not opened her mouth. She had heard, if not seen, the horrors that were being enacted at the Palace, and only lately

her hands had been clasped in those of her playmate, the Dauphin, whose constant cry had been, as in the distance the children had distinguished amid the horrible tumult the password of the Swiss guards, "For the Queen! For the Queen!"—"Oh, if they save mamma! Oh, if they save mamma! Gabrielle, you and I will fight for her too! If they come near us we will fight!" And the little Gabrielle thought, "I did not kiss hands before leaving, will their Majesties ever forgive? I will ask Monsiegneur to plead for me."

But with these thoughts was a vague feeling, an undefined knowledge, that something had happened that must not be spoken of. Why had Pierre dared to rush into the presence of their Majesties unsummoned? And then to behave in such a strange wild way! For the child, reared in courts and the ways of courtiers, had seen her father's major domo presume to make a sign to his Queen! And that Queen had thrown her hands above her head in agony, for she seemed to understand what Pierre had wished to tell. Then why, if her mother had sent for her, why was that mother not there when she at last reached home? Why had it been Marie who, so pale and strange, met them in the porter's lodge and had sent them off she knew not where? And even that loved Marie, that second mother, had not kissed her! What was it all? Could it be possible that everything was changed? She thought it must be, for, when playing in the gardens of the Tuileries, rough men had looked at the Royal children her companions, not as they used to look; and sometimes they even said rude things, and dared to call His Royal Highness the Dauphin "Young Capet," and tell him that she, Mademoiselle de Verminoux, was too good to play with such as he, for her forefathers had given glory to France, while his——! But they, the Royal children and she, had run away before the rude men had finished—and—then, oh, it was too dreadful to think of! She would ask.

"Pierre," she began, but got no further, for, from some hiding-place three men rushed on them, crying—"Here is fine prey! It was well we did not go with the others to murder the Capets, for here is a princess, not to

speak of this base coward, this wearer of another man's livery, this modern slave ! He shall die, and the child shall be ours ! She shall know that all homes are not palaces, and if she has been served by others she shall serve the vilest in the land ! "

Gabrielle felt her hand more firmly grasped, and with the other she clung to Pierre's coat tails. One against three, the man clenched his teeth, and a dagger flashed in his right hand. He waited until his foremost antagonist was on him, then he plunged it home. As the man fell dead he stood to withstand another shock, and wondered why it did not come. But the second of the ruffians was occupied in fighting a lad of not more than twelve years of age ; they rolled in the road, the lad screaming as he fought. The other Revolutionist was watching with interest the fortunes of the day, cheering both combatants as they struggled. " Brave boy ! Give it him ! If you were not a base aristocrat we would take you in our ranks, and you should help to wash out in blood the injuries of France—but you are a whelp ! Great God ! but he has killed the patriot ! Ah ! but your life shall pay for it, whelp of Hell, take that ! " But the blow never reached home, for the future conqueror of many a hard-won battle for France—shock-headed Pierre, the eldest of Marie Bellais' boys—had fled, tactician enough to know that his great uncle, surnamed " The Wily," was a match single-handed for any so-called patriot, and a flash had crossed the boy's mind—" if he pursues me so much the better." And he did, until by devious cuts and turns the boy was lost to sight.

Pierre lifted the panic-stricken child in his arms and crossed the road to the riverside.

There was no artificial embankment then ; it was almost like the bank of a river peacefully wending its way through country meadows ; trees, and an undergrowth of bushes, rushes, and other aquatic plants were growing there in profusion. On gaining this shelter, Pierre placed the child again on her feet, and at last spoke to her—

" Mademoiselle, your mother has asked me to take

you to her. I cannot carry out her wishes if you are disobedient. This is a moment of great peril for us all, and it is brave children who may save their parents' lives. Mademoiselle has just witnessed how brave Pierre has saved her own and mine, and Mademoiselle who is the daughter of soldiers and heroes will not let him be the only child in France who can do something for those older, and so help in restoring order, and save the lives of their Majesties and their Royal Highnesses, the children of France, Mademoiselle's little playmates."

"What am I to do, Pierre? Tell me quickly," answered Gabrielle. "I am as brave as Pierre, if not as strong. Oh, when I see mamma and tell her of him, what gifts will be his!"

Pierre kissed her tiny hand, and on lifting the low-lying branches of an elder bush, the entrance to a small cave was seen. They entered, and found that it smelt strongly of wine, which was not to be wondered at, as it was a hiding-place for barrels stolen from the barges which conveyed to Paris the wine made in the vine-growing provinces. It was fortunately empty, with the exception of one large empty barrel, open at one end. Into this Pierre lifted the child; who, though her eyes dilated, made no other sign of surprise or fear.

"Mademoiselle will wait where she is until I return, which I hope to do shortly. Should any one enter the cave, Mademoiselle must be perfectly silent." Saying this, Pierre turned the barrel as near the earthen wall as possible, and the playmate of princes, the god-daughter of a queen, and the idolized only daughter of one of the noblest dukes of France was left to the care of the King of kings and her own self-control.

She crouched in the barrel, and heard with ears sharpened by fear the footsteps of her old friend grow fainter and fainter, and she wondered again why the world had grown so strange, and men and women so wicked, for they had never fought in the streets before. "Mamma will explain perhaps. When I see mamma all will be right."

Then in the ears of the affrighted child came wilder, stranger sounds, for victory was with the insurgents; and,

drunk with wine and blood, flushed bands of Revolutionists were rushing citywards to their homes. As they passed she could hear the wild chorus of the carmagnole—"Madame Vito avait promis de faire égorger tout Paris." Then horrid jeers made the unhappy child tremble. At last her little heart almost ceased beating, for she heard the steps nearer than before, and knew that they were approaching her hiding-place. A moment after, she heard some uncertain steps stumble into the cave, and a thick voice thunder—"Still empty! Zounds! but the rascals shall suffer for their bad faith. I paid for three barrels, and here is but the one we emptied last night. But we will rest here and sleep; who knows but on awaking the wine may be here. Not room, do you say?" shouted the same voice. "Ah, but I can push this cursed barrel nearer to the wall."

Gabrielle thought of Pierre, and clenched her teeth. No sound should issue from her lips, and if she died it would not be as a coward. Then the fumes of the wine-cask began to overpower her, and she felt so strange, as if asleep, and yet able to understand everything. The men no longer talked or sang, but seemed asleep, for strange sounds made the roof of the cave echo with stentorian snores. This was a novel experience as regards noises for the little court lady, for it was the first time that Gabrielle de Verminoux had heard such plebeian sounds, and until the day of her death this nocturnal vagary was regarded by her as the line which must for ever separate the masses from the classes. Then the poor child lost consciousness, or slept.

When she awoke, the men were again talking and were seemingly pleased at something, for the man who had first spoken said, "Well, well, you have done your best, and we will all come and help you up with the wine." The trembling child heard them go out, and then she felt the barrel being moved, and a rough but kind face looked in on her. The man spoke—"Not a word, Mademoiselle! I am sent by Pierre to remove you and hide you among the bushes. Come at once." He lifted her in his arms and carried her out of the cave into the darkness, for it was midnight.

The stars shone bright and clear, and the night wind blew refreshingly on the child's aching head; but it was a sorry little creature that Pierre Bellais pressed again to his brave and faithful heart. "I was as brave as Pierre," she whispered. "It is easier to die than be a coward."

Too frightened to sleep she lay in Pierre's arms and listened. Three barrels of wine were taken out of a strange-looking barge, and Gabrielle heard the voice of the man who had taken her from the cave giving orders. At length she heard the party all wish one another "good-night"; then the barge passed slowly down the river. Shortly after,an owl hooted, near them,and to her surprise Pierre answered it by another hoot; then, holding her even tighter, he crept from their hiding-place, and with silent footsteps reached the river. A plank was thrown from the barge to the water's edge, over which they crossed. Then the unhappy child felt safe; for though the crew looked at her as though seeing for the first time some strange-looking animal, yet their faces expressed not only kindness but admiration—so much admiration, indeed, that Gabrielle, the little court lady, stretched out her hands to those rough waterside men and cried—"Gentlemen, you will, I know, take me safely to my beautiful mamma, and we will all pray for you to the Blessed Virgin—all—Her Majesty, the Dauphin, Madame Royale, mamma and I. But I will pray now," and, slipping down from Pierre's arms, the lovely child recited the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. But not alone, for her father's old retainer was by her side, and the rough crew, with the Captain and his wife, joined in fervently. Then the woman took her into a little cabin and undressed her, and put her into a strange-looking bed, into which the tired child crept comforted, if not happy.

But if Gabrielle was in safety, for the time being, on the barge, she had dearly to pay for what life was left in that poor frightened little body of hers. On awaking from her bed on the floor the next morning, the captain's wife (a good kind woman, whose children were all dead) found her little charge crimson with fever and wildly excited. On seeing the impossibility of making her

understand anything, the alarmed woman went for Pierre, who was sharing the very limited sleeping accommodation of the crew. On her explaining the state of affairs, both he and the Captain went to the cabin, and gave their opinions as to what would be the wisest course to pursue. Pierre suggested that the child's clothing should be completely hidden, and that the Captain's wife should, as they were now at Mantes, go on shore and ask advice from the local doctor.

The Captain did not agree with this plan, as he felt sure that the presence of the child on board would give rise to suspicion, and that if they were not stopped at Mantes they would be sure to be at Elbeuf or Rouen as their craft made but slow progress, even with the wind in their favour. He argued that the child was as healthy as she was beautiful, and added, as his experience, that " aristocrats, for all they looked so frail, wanted a lot more killing than other folk," and that if she was kept in bed and given tisanes made by his wife, and taken on deck when the barge was traversing a lonely district, he did not see but that all would be well ; in fact, he plainly said he thought she was safer ill than well, as then no one but the crew would even guess at her existence.

" And you, my fine friend," said he to Pierre, " these fine feathers " (here he laid his hand on Pierre's velvet coat) " must be laid aside. Annette," said he to his wife, " you can find him some clothes of mine."

The little soiled court dress and dainty under-clothes were shortly after packed with Pierre's livery in an empty box ; and when reason returned to poor Gabrielle, she could not think for some moments who the kind-looking sailor in dirty brown clothes could be ; for with his unpowdered hair, wild and unkempt, few but physiognomists would have recognized the stately major domo of her father's country seat, the Château de Verminoux. But the strange-looking man smiled kindly at her, and when he spoke the voice was the voice of Pierre ; so she stretched out her hands and cried—" We shall reach mamma in time, Pierre, for you know that I am no coward, and if there are bad people in the world,

surely there are as many good. Every one is good here, Madame Annette and the captain, all; I have watched them when they thought I slept, and they love me as I love them."

That night the Captain and Pierre talked over what was to be done when the coast was reached. The barge was unfit for sea work, even by the shore; so he, the Captain, would have to put them on board an English lugger bound for Deal. "We do the river work; the *Saucy Mary* does the sea passage," said he; "and if you pay the Captain of the lugger as you have paid me, no questions will be asked. But will you pardon me if I ask one?" Pierre looked assent.

"Well, what do you intend doing when once at Deal?"

"The child has a friend in England," answered Pierre—"an Admiral who, three years ago, was sent to Paris on political affairs. I saw him twice at the British Embassy, and once he dined at the Hotel de Verminoux, and on that occasion saw Mademoiselle for the first time; she was then only five years of age, and as beautiful as now. The Englishman, though a bachelor, loved children, and he was from the first devoted to her, and would carve her little toys. He even taught her a little English, such as—'I am an English girl'—'God save King George'—'This is my English papa.' As the uncle-in-law of Mademoiselle's nurse, I was often with the nursery party when it made excursions to the environs of Paris, and the Admiral, finding from my conversation that I was a sailor too, often talked to me about the discipline on board French men-of-war. On his departure, he presented me with a handsome souvenir, and expressed the wish that, if at any time I wanted assistance in England, I should apply to him, either at the Admiralty, or at his brother's house in Folkestone. So, you see, if once I can get away from Havre and reach Deal in safety, I have no more troubles or dangers to face. Mademoiselle will be under the charge of an English officer of high rank, a friend of her parents; and when once these troublesome times are over, and tranquillity restored to our beloved land, why" (here Pierre looked all hope and animation) "we shall return; and though

the light of the house lay dead at my feet only five days ago—my beloved master's wife—the return of his daughter safe and sound will comfort her father and brother, and give the former something to live for. Ah! Captain, I can never tell you how Mademoiselle is loved!"

"You can, you can!" shouted the Captain. "Why, here, on my barge, though we are patriots in a sort of way, there is not a man among us who would give either of you into the hands of our fellow citizens. My crew would mutiny on the spot. They tell me the Swiss fought to the last with the password 'For the Queen.' On this craft we are but rough sailors, looked down upon by the 'fair traders,' for we are, as you know, smugglers; but if the murderers of women and children, who, by their cowardice, are blasting the glory of our national Revolution, dare board this craft and search for her—we fight, man, we fight—and our password will be 'For the angel, Gabrielle.' And should they conquer, as they might do, friend," he laid a horny hand on Pierre's arm, "I stab that child to the heart. I have seen such horrors that I am, when I think about them, ashamed to call myself a man or a Frenchman. All that is brutish in the nation is now to the fore; if we have suffered, we have at least been considered brave and loyal, hard fighters on every field, and the protectors of women and children, and why should we now rank as murderers? It will work itself out, it will work itself out, but not until we have covered ourselves with ignominy and shame."

"Ah!" answered Pierre. "Things may turn out better than you foresee, and there is fine blood in the nation yet." And then he told the delighted Captain the story of Pierre, his eldest nephew. "Fought, man, like a young tiger, and artfully too! Never lost his presence of mind for a moment; cleverer than his mother, though she will never let him know it. Oh, but I wish she had the care of Mademoiselle now! Well, I shall do my best, never fear. And when she is well again, here in this cabin the Duc and his son will both thank you for your share, the greatest part of it, in saving the life of Mademoiselle."

CHAPTER IV

THE DUC DE VERMINOUX

When you depart from me, sorrow abides,
and happiness takes his leave.
—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

AND in Paris what was happening? Ah, what! A gentle, quiet man was wandering round his once happy home; for, on returning from the provinces, where he had been spending a few months, the Duc de Verminoux had found that home desolate—his wife murdered, his daughter absent, though said to be under good care, but with a sorry prospect of safety; the Tuileries taken by the populace, the Swiss decimated, and his sovereign, with his wife and children, prisoners in the Temple. And his confrères, his fellow nobles, where were they? Those wiser than their neighbours had fled to the frontiers to join the foreign armies that were biding their time to invade France; and these defaulters must, in a measure, be blamed for the unutterable horrors that followed; for, with all their bravado, the insurgents were intimidated, and terror prevailed in the capital, and in the celebrated speech by which Danton will be for ever remembered, he maintained "that France is in Paris, and they (the insurgents) must make their stand there." And then he uttered those dire and ominous words: "My advice is to confound agitators and stop the enemy. We must make the Royalists afraid! The emigrants are the traitors of France, and it is their friends and relations who remain in Paris as spies who will ruin their country. Let them perish!"

The horrible massacre of the prisoners—nobles, priests, ladies and children—recently confined in the prisons of

l'Abbaye, la Conciergerie, les Carmes, and la Force, was the result of this abominable rhetoric; for, on September 2 and 3, these unfortunate victims were slaughtered by 300 murderers, with a hideous parody of judicial forms. And did the Duc de Verminoux perish? No! He sought death, he courted imprisonment. Unarmed, unattended, he entered the Patriots' Club which was held in an obscure street in the faubourg Saint Antoine, and, standing on the platform, addressed the bloodthirsty tyrants of France. "I am Louis de Verminoux, twelfth duke of that name. Nine of my ancestors died fighting for France; two gave their lives for their compatriots in a vain attempt to ameliorate the condition of the so-called masses, and so brought upon themselves the wrath of the governing orders. My sword is for the use of France alone, and can never be drawn against my compatriots, however unworthy they may be. My country is before my king, dear though that king is to me, so the armies that now wait to invade my beloved land (in a so-called endeavour to restore order) I can never join. You have murdered my wife, my daughter is," here he threw up his hands, "I know not where. In the names of the men who fought for France, or died to give their fellow-countrymen liberty, I demand death from your hands, not only my own, but my son's. Let the House of de Verminoux perish, but as loyal men, not as traitors! Nothing will induce me to leave French soil, to which I have as much right as any of you."

They stood as they listened to him, those ferocious, God-forgetting wretches, but they knew that in every heart, however corrupt or lost, dwells a spark of the Divine. That spark, if fanned by the murder of the hero who stood before them, would become a blaze in no time, and change all things. So Danton sprang upon the platform and cried: "Citizens! It is true what Citizen Verminoux tells us, that he represents the gallantry of France. I order his arrest, but his prison will be his own Château. In the name of that new France which, as the Phœnix, will emerge from the ashes of its former despotism, I command that he be at once removed

from this hall, and, under the escort of citizen soldiers, leave Paris to-night for the Château de Verminoux, like his king, a prisoner of the nation."

No further hearing was granted; the unhappy Duc, seeing the unexpected turn of affairs (a turn so little to his liking), again tempted death, for he advanced and broke his sword before the audience and threw the fragments among it; but, as the pieces fell clanging to the ground, a better thought crossed his mind, and he shouted, "I have broken my sword; but if France should be in danger, and by God's wish I live (for I will not take my life—only cowards do that—though life will be a misery to me), other swords can be found for a de Verminoux to protect the sacred soil which has so often been redeemed by the blood of his ancestors."

A faint cheer broke from his listeners, for the Duc's fame as a soldier was well known.

"He is the greatest aristocrat of them all!" hissed Marat, "irreproachable in all that is worthy of his class; but we must act up to our creed. Though a Duc, his virtues and those of his forefathers are Republican, so he shall be protected; and, as death would give him pleasure, it shall be withheld, and he shall eat out his heart in misery in the cradle of his race."

So, a week after, a company of citizen soldiers escorted into his native village the unhappy man. The villagers stood aghast as the little procession passed. Could it be possible that that broken-down looking man was their old friend and master, whose stately form had been their ideal of manly beauty. As the little band passed Mon Plaisir Farm (the home of the Bellais) two boys rushed into the house with the news; and, a moment after, Marie Bellais, as much changed as her master, stood breathless with surprise and joy on the threshold of her home. "I, too, have a pass from the Tribunal," cried she to the sergeant in command. So saying, she joined the Duc, and accompanied him to the Château.

There was no change there. With the exception of the absent Pierre, the servants had remained at their posts. But if the mansion and its staff were as he ever remembered it, more dismally did that very fact bring into

contrast his domestic ruin. The mistress of that stately home, dead in all the vigour of her youth. "Only thirty-five," he murmured to himself, "nineteen years my wife. Why should she have paid the penalty of the crimes of others? And that innocent child of mine——"

Later on, he and his fellow-mourner sat together vainly hoping for consolation. After a long silence the Duc spoke: "Marie," he said, "you know all," and then he looked at the woman he addressed.

She stood before him, this typical Frenchwoman, whose ancestors had lived in constant intercourse with his from time immemorial. Younger than the dead Duchess by seven years, she could almost rival her in beauty, "with this difference," thought the Duc, "my Louise was an angel, whereas poor Bellais! Poor boys! A woman can be too superior, and it is not always those who wear the breeches that make home a Paradise, as mine was. Still Bellais loves his wife, though he dare not say his soul is his own; and poor Louise, too, she loved her. Well, I have never feared her, for I knew her bark never ended in bites, and that her best was not good enough in her eyes for mine."

Then he stretched out his hand, and said: "Marie, in moments of great grief, such as I have passed through, there comes a time when mental human suffering can go no further. That is the point at which I am now, and the bitterness of death is passed for me; but death does not come to those who mourn, to those who stretch out longing arms and cry, 'Deliver me from the burden of life'!"

"Stop! Stop! Monseigneur," cried Marie. "Monseigneur will remain here. His word is given, as mine is, to remain in our homes and to be as those dead. Your word is given, the word of a de Verminoux, and here, in the home of her birth, Monseigneur and Monsieur le Marquis will receive some day, be it far or near, our beloved child. You do not ask my news—but, oh, Monsiegneur, I am but a poor foolish woman," here the Duc almost smiled at the idea of Marie's humility, an aspect of her character so little known to her husband and her children,

"and do not put myself in the same rank of intelligence as Monseigneur, so I intreat that you will not blame me for not keeping Mademoiselle Gabrielle with me! For I was mad with grief, I had seen too much, I had heard too much, and I did not think that the populace had anything human left in it. And now I do not know how I ever braved it; it was the men who saved me and my boys, but Mademoiselle would have had no chance."

"Marie, Marie," replied the Duc, "why did you not change the dress of Gabrielle, and send Louis with Pierre? But what am I saying? How dare I even wish that a mother should give a child of her own for mine?"

Then the Duc de Verminoux understood for once the position of Jean Bellais; for, white with rage at being thus misunderstood, Marie Bellais poured forth vials of anger. Her children were as nothing to her! Boys were future men, and therefore at the best only fit for powder! While, for her foster child, she would have given her life—her seven sons' lives, and that of Jean, their poltroon of a father! She would have said more, but, astonished at the surprise in the Duc's face, she gave a final flourish of her skirts and flounced out of the room and Château, and rushed broken-hearted to her home, leaving the Duc on the field of battle, it is true, but hardly the victor.

Left by himself, the Duc rang a bell, then looked out of the window. On the valet's entrance he turned sadly, and ordered that the state drawing-room should be opened. On regaining his position at the window, he noticed that, though there was no wind, the branches of a large shrub were moving. He watched it with interest, and shortly after a boy's head peeped out.

The Duc opened the window and called out, "Pierre!" (for it was he) "Your mother has gone home—what do you want?"

"To see you, Monseigneur," answered the boy.

"Come in, my lad, come in at once," said the Duc. "What have you to tell me?"

"Not much, alas!" cried Pierre, "and I do not wish

praise from Monsiegneur, but I followed Mademoiselle and my uncle without their knowledge, and I believe they reached the Seine in safety." He then gave a very modest description of his share in the attack of the three men, and the strategy which resulted in the final undoing of the enemy.

"Brave boy! Brave boy!" said the Duc. "If I were not a prisoner, and were still in command, I would find you a commission."

"Ah!" said Pierre, "that is why I am here. Monseigneur, I can no longer stay with my mother, though there is not a better mother in France. But I am now past twelve years of age and should not be beaten every day. The enemy are on our frontiers, our land cries for soldiers. The citizen guards who have conducted Monseigneur to Verminoux tell me that such admiration did my mother excite by her dauntless courage on leaving Paris, that if I ran away and joined the Republican colours I should be enrolled at once. So I am now on the point of starting, and to you I bid farewell, and through you to all. Do not betray my confidence. As a soldier of France, Monseigneur will be glad that one born and bred on his estate should fight for his country, if not for his king. But I am too young to understand politics or the wrongs of the masses. I fight so that no impure blood, no blood of the invader shall soil our territory. Farewell, Monseigneur!" and, before the Duc could recover from his surprise, his hand had been kissed, and the soldier of the future, the future Marshal of France, had left a prisoner in his mansion the soldier of the past, the guardian of the white flag and Fleur-de-Lis of France, while he, the runaway lad, was to cover the flag of the future, the Tricolor, with glory, glory such as royal France had never known.

"Poor Marie!" thought the Duc. "Her boys will all be soldiers. But what will she say? Poor woman! The only child she loves is ours, Louise's and mine. Poor wandering child. That want of confidence in her own powers may have cost that child her life. Poor Marie, I must never blame her again; but good news may come any day now." And then he went into the

lonely state drawing-room, and looked longingly at Madame le Brun's portrait of his loved wife. It hung in the place of honour at the top of the room ; it was life-like ; she stood in all her beauty, holding her now absent child by the hand. " My darlings, my darlings ! " he murmured. " But one of you may come back to me, while the most loved I hope one day to rejoin."

And so the evening passed. But, before going to bed, a message came from the Farm to inquire if Pierre had been seen at the Château. A groom of the chambers informed the Duc, who asked if M. Bellais were waiting, " If so, send him to me at once."

Shortly after, M. Bellais was announced. " Sit down beside me, mon ami," said the Duc, " for we have much to talk over, and my troubles, alas ! are of a more tragic nature than your own, though the news I have to tell you will, I daresay, not be agreeable to you. Jean, I have offended Marie, and for the first time I, too, have received almost a scolding ! I regret that I wounded her noble heart, for she left me nearly wild with grief. Still I can understand her son, who inherits his mother's invincible will and bravery, longing to be, in a sense, his own master, free from petticoat command ; so, when I tell you that Pierre has joined the colours to fight against the invaders of his country, you must not lose courage, but feel as I do, that the boy has done well. This afternoon he came and bade me farewell, and told me his plans. Even yet the Republicans may rally round the king, but my word is given, I am dead to politics. Do not let his mother worry—Pierre is with the company who escorted me from Paris. Who knows but that some day he may stand in this room with his brave breast covered with medals ! Do you know, Jean, that he has saved my child's life ? "

Here the Duc related to the delighted father Pierre's first combat, and then they talked on until the groom of the chambers, veiling a smile, announced that " Jean Bellais was wanted." With a start, in which there was no little fear, Bellais rose from his chair and hurriedly wished the Duc good-night; the latter, wisely, did not seek to prolong the interview.

No one ever quite knew what passed between husband and wife on that return journey to the Farm, though many were the suppositions ; but the next day, and for many days after, when the neighbours asked after Pierre, her first-born, Madame Bellais answered curtly, " What can you expect from him, true son of his father, ungrateful to his salt, unworthy of me ! He has gone to fight for the so-called Republicans. Much good may he do them ! He is no son of mine, let him go and stay with his traitors ; I will have no more of him here ! "

And then the neighbours smiled, but not until their smiles ran no danger of being seen, for the verdict in the village was that no son of spirit could stand such a virago of a mother as the handsome Madame Bellais, and that doubtless, as they grew older, the six other boys would disappear in a similar manner. A wag among these detractors said he thought la mère Bellais should herself be sent to guard the frontiers, as doubtless her presence would intimidate the invaders ! At this the listeners made very merry, and one and all wished well to the stubby-headed son of Jean Bellais, who, if he inherited his father's peculiarities of appearance, had every inch his mother's spirit ; and they marched in a body to the *Golden Fleece* to drink his health and well-doing.

" We shall hear of him again," cried a wealthy farmer, an unmarried man popularly accredited with being a rejected suitor of the mother of the hero of the day (a blessed refusal for which he never felt himself grateful enough !). " We shall hear of him again ! Mark my words ! And every penny I possess the boy shall have, to show how I admire independence and aversion to petticoat government. Three cheers for our young warrior ! "

" What are the do-nothings cheering at, Louis ? " said Madame Bellais, on hearing the sounds.

" They are cheering Pierre, mamma," answered the child.

" Let them cheer, the idiots ! " cried she, and then she banged the door in a fury.

A month after this, the Duc de Verminoux received

a few lines from the boy, who had been drafted with some other lads into the Artillery, then serving under Dumouriez at Grand-Pré, where they were awaiting the Prussians. He was well and happy, and already under the protection of a young captain whom he adored—his name, Monseigneur Napoléon Bonaparte. So Pierre, true child of France, was already to the fore, and often a letter would be sent from the frontier to the Château with respectful inquiries for the health of the Duc, and for news as to the fate of the fairy princess, who was to be for ever the only love of that dauntless soldier whose glorious career enabled him to guard with watchful solicitude the grand seigneur of his native village. In fact, this career of Pierre's caused misery to Louis de Verminoux, ci-devant Marquis de Breuil, and, in those mysterious absences of his from his father's prison home, many surmised that, under an assumed name, he too fought for his beloved land.

Years passed, each less tragic as they succeeded one another, for, as all had foreseen, the most chivalrous people of the world turned with loathing on the miscreants who had soiled the fair fame of their nation, and had martyred a king and queen whose heritage had been the evil doing of those they came after.

But Time, that can heal a nation's wounds and cover scars with glory, is ineffectual in healing the sorrows of a human heart. Wounds may be borne with a smiling face, and scars hidden under festive garments, but the smile is ofttimes but the smile of courtesy and the disguise—" ah, there's the rub ! "

From that fatal 21st of January, 1793, when, in the poetic language of the Abbé Edgeworth, " the son of St. Louis ascended to Heaven," the gloom deepened in the Duc's home, though each day brought with it hope. Each morning his first question to his valet, as he drew back the curtains from his bedroom window, was the same, even when long years had passed—" Charles, any news ? " " Any letters ? " And the valet's face was as sad as his master's when he answered, " It's early yet, Monseigneur ! "

Some eight years after the loss of his daughter, another shade of sadness was added to the prevailing gloom. The Duc dreamed a most realistic dream. He was standing, so it seemed to him, by the Porte d'Honneur of his Château. Everything was in its summer glory; the early flowers were all in bloom, when up the fountain court he saw, walking in his direction, a lovely girl of sixteen. It was his lost Gabrielle, but a child no longer, and more beautiful than he had even imagined she could become. She was in radiant health; the soft June breeze tossed her golden curls and fluttered the white muslin of her dress. He wondered why that dress seemed so little worthy of the beautiful form that wore it? And while he was wondering how his child had reached him, she faced him; he could have touched her; but something seemed to hold him back, breathless with joy, and he waited. Then he saw that his daughter's face was wet with tears, and then she spoke: "Papa, papa," she cried, "why did you refuse to have me home once more? You will never see me again." Wild with horror he stretched out his arms, but the figure receded, and though he followed her through what seemed interminable woods, the white dress just fluttering before him, he could never gain on her. At last he saw her face to face again, but a wide river was between them, and he knew it to be the River of Death, and that it was he who had passed through its dire waters. But he seemed strangely happy, and he knew that his wanderings were over, for his daughter was at last coming to him; and he looked at the lovely face that smiled on him, but it was no longer his little Gabrielle's, it was no longer the lovely maiden's of a minute since; it was the face of an old lady! But a clear voice cried through what seemed the noise of many waters, "Rejoice, rejoice! for former things have passed away. And when she has joined you, and the River is passed, the ravages of years will pass away as the memory of earthly sorrows. Rejoice, rejoice!"

Then he awoke. But when Charles drew back the curtains he was astonished that the usual question was not asked, so he hazarded the remark, "No news as

yet, Monseigneur," and looked at his master's face—it was wet with tears. After his early cup of coffee he walked to Mon Plaisir, and, seated by his child's nurse, he poured out his sorrows and convictions. "I shall never see my Gabrielle again," he said sadly; "she will come to me. You, Marie and Louis, will welcome her, but I have, by some unknown action or remark, caused her return to be delayed for years."

Whatever Marie felt she concealed from the Duc, and for an hour at least she soundly rated him for his undue faith in anything that was caused by indigestion. "Dreams, indeed! Why Jean once dreamt that he was a widower! It was his first and last dream! At least," she added, "the first and last he related to me!"

But, for all his folly, for all his giving way, never was Marie so tender, never so human; and when the déjeuner hour drew near, though maids, she knew, would take advantage of her absence, and her three remaining boys (for three more had joined the army) do all they had vainly tried to do for the last month against her wishes, and Jean spend the whole afternoon at the *Golden Fleece* wasting both time and money, and talking of things he had no more idea of than a cabbage—regardless of all this liberty given to her subjects, Marie volunteered to spend the afternoon at the Château, and go through Mademoiselle's things, so that all should be ready should she return; for, with a want of logic peculiar to the reasoner, dreams, according to Marie, always went by contraries, and doubtless before long their darling would be with them. So she bravely trudged by her fellow-mourner's side, and kept a bright face through the déjeuner, at which she was present, for she and hers were ranked as equals now by the Duc, and Pierre as a much-loved son. And when, after coffee, they went to a turret room (her old nursery) and took from cupboards and drawers dresses and toys, the tears which fell among them were not noticed by her companion.

At length, from a bunch of keys hanging at her side, Marie chose a small key, and unlocked a toy trunk, and took out from it a very handsome doll, dressed, regardless

of expense, as a court lady. "Ah!" she cried. "How pleased Mademoiselle will be to see Mademoiselle de France again! I warrant her first cry when she enters this room will be: 'Marie, Marie, where is Mademoiselle de France?"

"But she will be an old lady then, Marie," said the Duc.

"Nonsense, Monseigneur, nonsense! You must see the doctor to-morrow." But, in her heart of hearts, Marie was as much impressed as her master, with this difference: he felt that no effort of his could avail; while Marie, with her invincible will, determined to struggle to the end; for had not the Duc said, "You and Louis will welcome her?" To her faithful heart it did not matter how or when if at last she could clasp her darling once more in the arms that had cradled her.

But now we will leave them in the old nursery, and rejoin the child for whose return so many longed, and longed in vain.

CHAPTER V

HAVRE, 1792

Heaven preserve you!

—*Macbeth.*

THE journey down the Seine had been safely accomplished, and the Captain of the barge, accompanied by Pierre and surrounded by a rough-looking crew of English sailors, stood on the quay at Havre, arguing with a man whose appearance was most forbidding, not to say villainous. At times both voices were raised, and that of the English Captain's seemed to grow in power and volume as the conversation lengthened. Pierre listened with downcast eyes, occasionally joining in; at last, after more protestations and indignant remonstrances, the Frenchman took from his flap-pocket a bag of money, and almost threw it in the face of his opponent, who, having gained his point, looked sheepish, though dogged, for his crew, who had listened silently to the argument, did not seem to be quite of his way of thinking, for two of them murmured "Shame on you!"

The bargain being concluded, the French Captain invited all interested in it to the wine-shop, while Pierre disappeared to the further side of the harbour, returning shortly with Madame Annette and Gabrielle. He carried on his shoulder a rough box, keyless, and simply corded—suitable, in fact, to the station of the owner, for in the dress made for her by Madame Annette, despite her distinction of manner and great beauty, Gabrielle de Verminoux was simply, in the eyes of the English sailors, a pretty, delicate child belonging to the same class of life that they did. From the account given of the wanderers by the French Captain, Pierre, his brother-

in-law, was compelled to leave France on account of a quarrel with one of the members of the gang of smugglers to which they all belonged, who had not only sworn to take his life, but that of his grandchild also ; and for these reasons a sojourn at Deal for a few months until the storm blew over was not only prudent but obligatory.

While waiting for the sailors, Gabrielle looked with intense interest at the sea. She was full of questions as to where she was to be taken, and why her mother had ever ventured on such a perilous journey. For until the previous night the poor child had never seen the sea, which at first was almost an object of terror to her, for it had not been calm when it welcomed the little fugitive. Like the wild passions of the seething masses of humanity from which she had been rescued, the angry waves dashed with reckless energy on the stone bulwarks of the quay. No soft blue sea was it, illumined by bright sunshine and overhung by a canopy even more intense in colour, but grey and wild, with strange ridges of white seething foam that rolled and broke, re-formed and gathered in strength, until as mighty billows they broke again in fury upon the quay, throwing up delicate, snow-white clouds of spray. The wind howled by fits and starts, for though the gale that had lashed the sea to its present fury had abated, it had not yet ceased.

Madame Annette looked with dismay on the wild scene before her, but beyond a few kind words of encouragement she made no comments. Pierre was even more reticent, and Gabrielle shivered with cold. On seeing this, Madame Annette boldly entered the wine-shop ; a few minutes afterwards she returned with her husband and the Captain of the English ship. More conversation ensued. Finally, they all descended a flight of steps, and went on board a rough-looking sailing-boat with a very high free-board. She was what was known then as a Deal lugger. Amidships there was a small cabin, into which Pierre carried the child, Madame Annette and her husband following to bid them au revoir, the poor woman entreating both men to let her have the charge of the child ; entreaties that had so much

good sense in them that Pierre was for some moments uncertain as to how he should act. The prospect of losing her little charge made the childless woman bold, and she pleaded that she should be allowed to go to her native village and take the child with her as her own daughter, for, as she said, "No one there knows that I am childless, and I feel sure that Mademoiselle would be safe among my friends."

"If it were not for the English Admiral," said Pierre to the French Captain, "I should do as your good wife suggests; but I do not like to deprive my master's daughter of the luxury that she has been accustomed to, and which doubtless will be given her in an English home."

"Bah! for your English Admiral," said the French Captain. "Leave the child to us. I am of the same opinion as my wife; think it over, friend. Havre as yet seems tranquil; we have time to change our plans. Never mind the money paid to these Englishmen. You go with them, and I will answer with my life to the Duc should I not save the child. Keep her on French soil, man, there are still loyal hearts in France, loyal to weakness and innocence," and the honest fellow held Pierre firmly by the hand.

Again Pierre hesitated and, but for the child herself, who unwittingly sealed her own fate, almost assented. But Gabrielle, poor Gabrielle, cried, "What about mamma, Pierre? You know that she expects me to join her in England. Had mamma remained in France I would have gone with Madame Annette, for she has been so good to me, as good as mamma and Marie; but Madame Annette will understand why I must cross this dreadful sea."

The three listeners looked at one another in dismay at the child's remarks, and Pierre, glad to have the responsibility of choice taken from him, said gladly, "I take Mademoiselle where she wishes, is it not so, Mademoiselle?"

Gabrielle answered firmly, "Yes." Then she turned and thanked her devoted friends for all that they had done for her, wondering as she did so at the tears which

disfigured Madame Annette's homely countenance, for with inflamed eyes, nose, and cheeks, the poor woman's presented a forcible contrast to those lovely faces to which she had formerly been accustomed. "If she is not as beautiful as Her Majesty, mamma, or Marie," thought Gabrielle, "she had a heart like theirs, all goodness, all worth." And, thinking this, she threw herself into the good woman's arms and entreated her to accompany her to England.

Again did the fate of Gabrielle tremble in the balance, for with the child held firmly in her arms the woman asked for permission to take charge of her at least during the voyage, but with no success. Separation from his good Annette was not to be entertained for one moment by the worthy Captain, and the thought of his wife's absence from him for perhaps an indefinite period, together with the alarming prospect of her being surrounded by Englishmen—at whose matrimonial peculiarities of selling their wives, when tired of them, at Smithfield Market for a shilling, he had so often made merry—made his refusal not only energetic but decisive.

"Leave the child in France, Pierre," he said again. "She is safer here; why risk strangers?"

"If I do not succeed with the Admiral," said Pierre, "or if I find that Mademoiselle is not happy, I can always return to Havre, and can time my return so as to join you when you again bring a cargo down the river." And so it was arranged. Communications could be easily maintained by means of the *Saucy Mary*; and with fervent assurances of goodwill and speedy reunion, the Captain and his wife bade farewell, as they feared to irritate the owner of the lugger by remaining longer on board, for they knew that when once the wind dropped, he would not lose the first outward tide.

So these two poor, unlettered, rough, but faithful friends, passed for ever from the life of their little compatriot.

Pierre's heart was heavy as he looked at their retreating forms, but he kept a cheerful countenance, and chatted gaily of the Admiral's pleasure on seeing his little friend again.

"But he will not know me in these clothes," said Gabrielle, who, with her cheeks still wet with tears, looked lovingly on Madame Annette's handiwork. "But I can at least put on my Fleur-de-Lis and speak the English he so kindly taught me; I have not forgotten it, Pierre, though for some time we have led such changed lives."

"Admiral Woodruff will not require anything to remind him of the happy days he passed in Paris, and when Mademoiselle sees him he will be the first to remember her."

"Pierre, you make me laugh," said Gabrielle. "As if mamma would not know me in any clothes, and you know when I arrive in England I shall join her."

For one moment a look of anxious fear crossed the questioner's face so agonized in its inquiry that Pierre, while hastening to calm any apprehensions, shuddered at the near approach of the moment when his little charge would hear of her loss.

"I cannot say for certain, Mademoiselle, if Madame la Duchesse will be with the Admiral. I take you to him by her orders, he will tell us what are her wishes, and where you are to remain until you return to France."

With her suspicions thus quieted, Gabrielle seated herself on a locker by her old friend, and shortly after fell asleep, and so soundly did she sleep that the entrance of Captain Rafferty did not awake her. Even his shifty countenance softened as he looked down on her worn little face.

"You won't know your grandchild in a week," he said roughly to Pierre. "The sea air will be the making of her, you mark my words! I like the looks of her, though she is such a weedy-looking lass; she's full of pluck—a regular vixen, I'll be bound! Here! put her in here," and he drew back a curtain that concealed from view two comfortable berths. "Put her on the lower one, she'll sleep for hours, mind ye. I know what the sea air is to youngsters; and you come on shore with me. We shan't get off with this tide; the sea is going down, and by this time to-morrow, if the wind keeps fair, we shall be halfway over."

All this conversation was but partly understood by Pierre, for his knowledge of the English tongue was but limited. On seeing his uncertainty, Captain Rafferty with reluctance repeated his instructions, remarks, and invitation in French, which, with the natural quickness of a Frenchman, Pierre readily understood, though it would have puzzled many unused to the strange jargon used by the English contraband traders. But he refused the invitation to go ashore, giving as excuse his want of means, and the expenses he was likely to be put to on English soil, where he knew he would have to remain some time.

"I will find you a berth," said the Captain, "and Leblanc (the Captain of the barge) tells me that you are a sailor, so maybe as you will go afloat, and there is lots to be done on the sea off Deal, I can tell you. Why, we do a roaring trade with the outward bounds, not to speak of the men-of-war, in eggs, vegetables, milk, bread, and fresh meat. And then our line of work," here he winked, "though risky, brings pots of money, though them as should get it, don't (that's me and mates as runs the cargo across). I don't say as we ain't paid, and paid well; but it's them, as calls themselves sort of gentry, that gets the cream of it. We sea-goers gets the crusts, and risk our lives for them. Why, mate, I'll show you a fine house in Upper Deal, for all it looks so honest and respectable, that's just hollow with cupboards and hiding-places, and what we bring across gets there, the Lord knows how. But it doesn't stay there long I can tell you, for on dark windy nights, by the side of a wood three good miles from Upper Deal, horses with padded hoofs stand waiting to be loaded, and from the unseen mouth of an underground passage our freight is again put in movement. It's true such folks hazard the cash, but what about our lives? And the risk is awful—our only safety is that the other chaps, the sea-dogs, don't give us away; it would be hard on one of them if he did, he would not live a week. Have you got any news?"

"Not much," answered Pierre, "but I have heard that there is rioting in Paris, and that the houses of the

nobles were being rifled by the populace, and all for liberty!"

"What are your views?" asked Rafferty.

"Liberty for all!" answered the brave man. "Liberty for the rich, liberty for the poor, and above all things toleration."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Rafferty. "Toleration! That's what's going on in England! We hard workers tolerate the arrogance and vices of those we are taught to honour and obey. We tolerate, we permit them to exist, but"—here he bent forward and hissed in Pierre's ear—"we have a rod in pickle for them. There is dissatisfaction everywhere, and in the Fleet too. We are almost ready to strike and join hands with France in her struggle to be free."

"But," said Pierre, "I thought that England was the land of the free, and it was for that reason that my grandchild and I are seeking refuge there."

"Use your eyes and your ears then when you get there," said Rafferty, "and tell me what you think of what you hear and see," and he gave an ironical laugh. "The only place I am free on is this lugger; I am king here, I can tell you, and that's what I call freedom!"

"But," said Pierre, "we could not all command, some have to be commanded. All think they would be happy if they were kings; I have seen two; neither looked happy."

"Come to the wine-shop, mate," said Rafferty, "you will hear more news, and maybe as you won't get back among your own for years——"

Pierre did not like to refuse the invitation, for he could now understand that the orator was one who required obedience on the part of his companions, otherwise a demonstration of freedom from his point of view might ensue.

"Each question has supporters," said Pierre again. "As for me I am all for liberty, and down with tyrants, let them be who they may, kings or costermongers!" But seeing a queer look cross his companion's face he thought it would be wiser to emphasize the kings, and to save his conscience he sacréd all the foreign potentates

whose armies were threatening the frontiers of France. After this tirade, it was impossible to refuse the invitation to the wine-shop, and so artfully had Pierre endorsed Rafferty's views that the English smuggler volunteered to pay all expenses that should accrue, though as a rule it was his playful way to get his drinks by bullying some younger member of the crew who was too nervous to refuse wagers, the winning of which was a foregone conclusion in favour of the bully. Pierre winced at appearing as the boon companion of such a rascal, but as he looked at the slumbering child he felt that he must act his part with prudence.

On arriving at the cabaret, from which he had been unwillingly recalled by Madame Annette, Rafferty introduced his companion not only as the best of fellows but as a patriot of renown. The cabaret was crowded, not only with English sailors but with an equal number of Frenchmen, who all seemed strangely excited. Sitting down by the side of one who appeared the quietest of the party (after giving Rafferty a hint as to the reason for so doing), Pierre discovered the cause of the universal clamour, and heard with horror of the massacre of the nobles, priests, women and children in the prisons of Paris on the 2nd and 3rd of September. For once he rejoiced at the death of his beloved mistress. "It was only a moment's pain," he thought with a shudder, as the incidents of that terrible 10th of August crossed his brain, "and she was spared the torture of a prison. But my master, can he be still alive?" and Pierre determined to find out as much as he could without danger of appearing to know too much of Parisian life. Rafferty joined them and listened with delight to the horrors narrated, nudging repeatedly his new friend, and commenting on the probability of similar scenes in England. The prospect of the loot, too, made him perfectly delirious, and he was reckless of expense in his wish to make his guest drink.

Pierre, fortunately, was able to hold his own until Rafferty was too intoxicated to notice what he did. Pierre possessed a fine voice, and sang most of the revolutionary songs, so Rafferty was not only proud of

his friend, but joined in the chorus of "Ça ira" with as much vehemence as the Frenchmen. He wildly asked when the Terror would spread to the provinces, and if Havre would equal Paris in her struggle to be free, and show the world that France, not England, was the land of Freedom. "And we'll help you too!" he cried. "Ça ira! Ça ira!" and then he sank on the bench and whined piteously of his hard lot. At this the perfidious Pierre suggested another drink, after which Captain Rafferty was gently taken into a back-room where he slumbered for hours—hours that were employed by Pierre in vain attempts to discover if the Duc de Verminoux had been one of the victims of the tragic massacre. "For he was a brave soldier!" he cried, "and though a sailor, I served under him on more than one occasion."

At last he came upon a desperado who not only confirmed Pierre's worst fears, but defiantly asserted himself to be the Duc's assassin. The words were hardly out of his mouth when a blow from Pierre levelled him to the ground. "He is too fortunate! The citizen is too boastful—one Duc only! Ah! but wait until we have a chance here!" and he again shouted at the top of his voice—"Madame Vito avait promis de faire égorger tout Paris."

At this renewed manifestation any suspicions that might have been aroused by his rash attack were lulled—a very easy matter, as nearly all the spectators were in a condition the very reverse of critical. But for the dead Duc's daughter (and Pierre never doubted for a moment the veracity of his informant), he would then and there have finished with his own life and that of the living monster who had murdered his heroic master. "For such as he," thought the man, "to deprive the nation of such a commander!" But again the fate of that master's child, and her defenceless position, flashed across his mind, and he quietly joined Rafferty in the seclusion of the back parlour.

The night passed slowly as he watched and listened to the heavy slumbers of the drunken smuggler, but in the early morning after a final turn or two the latter opened

his eyes and sat up. He looked round him suspiciously and seemed reassured at the sight of the recumbent form of Pierre, who was wise enough to feign heavy slumber.

Whatever satisfaction the sight of Pierre's sleeping off a carouse might give him, he did not allow his prostrate friend to benefit by it, for the first use he made of his feet—at least one of them—was to kick him, expostulating at the same time on the inferiority of Frenchmen to Englishmen. "Get up, you lazy hound, you! I'm not going to lose a tide for such as you!"

With apparent difficulty Pierre collected his thoughts, and getting on his feet announced his readiness to start.

"Start, indeed!" said Rafferty. "You, so tender like to the grandchild, mind ye, never gave her a thought. And it's me that will think to take the young minx something for her breakfast. You ain't worth that child! Sarve you right if I left you here and took the care of her myself; she would run about fine with my youngsters! I would, mind ye, but for my wife who is a regular tartar, I can tell you!"

This threat alarmed Pierre, but he began to understand his man, and by timely administrations to his vanity, they were soon on the best of terms again; and, after the purchase of some new-laid eggs and fruit, they turned their steps in the direction of the stairway, at the bottom of which was moored the *Saucy Mary*.

They went to the cabin at once, and found Gabrielle still asleep. This completely restored Rafferty to good humour. "What did I tell you, mate," he whispered. "Youngsters are all like that when they first smell the sea. Now don't you wake her; she'll be wakeful enough, I warrant, in half an hour's time, for we shall be off by then. You will give a hand?"

The morning was fine; the September air cool and bracing; and the sea, comparatively calm, was the colour of the sky. It rippled in the sunshine a vast expanse of sapphire blue. Boats were already sailing out of the harbour, and the voices of the sailors calling to one another, some near and others far distant, gave the human interest so necessary to complete a beautiful

scene. The noise made by the crew as they unfurled the sails and lifted the anchor, together with the novel motion of the boat, aroused Gabrielle, who now accepted changes in her surroundings with comparative unconcern. She stepped outside the cabin as soon as her little attentions to her toilet had been attended to, and watched with intense interest the preparations for the sea trip that yesterday she had dreaded. But to-day all was changed. The sea that, only the day before, was an enraged monster, now was gentle and inviting, and the air she breathed seemed to fill her with delight and exhilaration.

And then the knowledge that when once it was crossed her troubles would be over, and that she would be, not only safe with her English friend, but, possibly, in her loved mother's arms, made the face that smiled so gaily at Rafferty a very happy, confident one, and the man was so pleased at her recognition that he stumbled forward to wish Gabrielle good-morning.

The child, though in a manner displeased at his familiarity, accepted his proffered friendship with cordiality, and so fearless did she appear to the man as the *Saucy Mary* fairly bounded out of the harbour, that he was more than ever inclined to befriend her. He watched Pierre as that worthy assisted, and observed his good seamanship, and in his villainous French congratulated him on his ability. Then Gabrielle, in her turn, addressed Rafferty in her elegant diction, and delighted the rough sailor with her politeness.

At last all was in good order, and Rafferty became anxious for his morning meal. In 1792, tea was a luxury in England, and even in wealthy middle class houses the usual beverage drunk at breakfast was small beer, wholesome, without doubt, to those who were accustomed to it, but most unpalatable to any one who had never tasted beer of any sort. Fortunately Pierre had foreseen this difficulty, and while accepting the captain's hospitality for himself, he produced from his pocket a bottle of wine and explained to the Englishman his reasons for giving it to his grandchild. But Gabrielle, hearing and understanding the conversation,

pushed aside her so-called grandfather, and taking out Rafferty's drinking horn from its little stand, not only drank his health in small beer, but that of His Majesty King George, and to the smuggler's astonishment gave the toast in very good English.

Nauseous as must have been the taste of beer to Gabrielle she was too much her father's daughter even to wince, and she smiled in such an innocent manner at the Captain that he once more asked her name. Gabrielle, without any hesitation, answered, "I am Kitty, an English girl. God save King George!" After this all on board vied with each other to please their little passenger, who proved a first-rate sailor, and clapped her hands with delight at billows that seemed larger than others, and with golden hair streaming in the wind sang charming little songs—not to her audience, had they but known it—but to the memory of the past, and to unburden her little heart of the misery and confinement of the past month. She sang as a bird sings, to herald spring and happiness, songs of rapture at the thought of reunion with her dearly loved mother. Of her father, Gabrielle never thought, though he, too, was dearly loved; but from her earliest infancy he had been so constantly with the army he commanded that his little daughter naturally considered that he was at his post defending their Majesties and the nation from the wicked disturbers of peace and order. "A difficult task," thought the child, when she recalled the terrible 10th of August; and again the sad distrustful feeling came over her, and she sat down abruptly and burst into tears.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN NATURE SPOKE THE TRUTH

All in the Downs the fleet was moor'd,
The streamers waving in the wind.

—*J: Gay.*

"THE rough sea-dogs," as Rafferty called his crew, did their best to cheer their new mate, "Kitty"; and, half an hour after, at their earnest solicitations, the songs were renewed, for all was going well with the *Saucy Mary*. The wind was in her favour, and for the moment there was nothing to do on board—every one sat at leisure and did as he pleased. Rafferty disappeared into his cabin in order to repair by wholesome slumber the ravages caused to his constitution by his drunken bout. Pierre, too, worn out by his sleepless night and by grief at the news of the death of his master, the Duc, and in dismay at the vague future of his little mistress, sat silent. As he looked at the singing child his heart was heavy, so heavy that he bent his head, and tears rolled down his cheeks; fortunately, they were unnoticed, and then he, too, slept.

But in the solitude of the cabin, the door of which he had securely fastened, Rafferty did not at first court slumber. He had been astonished at the ease of manner of "Kitty," and her singing had aroused suspicions as to her possible rank. "That child ain't no such as we," was his verdict. "How am I to find out who and what she may be? The man's all right, a sailor is always a sailor, and he is as much a sailor as I am, and ain't no officer, but the child——"

Then he clapped his hand on his thigh with delight, for the thought crossed his mind that perhaps she was

a princess being taken disguised to England for safety. Had he not heard that the palaces and mansions of the nobility were being robbed in Paris? Yes! she must be a real French princess! Rafferty's little grey-green eyes glistened with pleasure! He would do his best for her, and when the great moment came for her to be recalled to France doubtless substantial rewards would be his. As he thought this he proceeded to take off his coat. While doing so his eyes fell on the wooden box in which Pierre had packed the clothes which he and the child had worn when leaving Paris. It was keyless, though corded, and it did not take Rafferty long before the cord was loosened and the contents of the box examined by the astonished man; for it must be understood that Rafferty had no intention originally of robbing his passengers—he was overhauling their property from curiosity only.

Even to his untutored eyes the magnificence of Pierre's livery was apparent. He did know something of velvet, and the texture of Pierre's coat was of the first quality. His eyes grew rounder when they gazed on the little white satin dress with its embossed pink and silver roses, dainty silk stockings and still daintier shoes with diamond buckles; the lace-trimmed underclothing too, all were conclusive—this charming Kitty was a princess! As he thought this, he felt something hard in the lining of Pierre's coat. With the dexterity of one to whom hiding is not only a fine art, but the result of long and arduous training, Rafferty traced the opening through which this hidden treasure had been introduced to its present position; he soon discovered it, and without much difficulty drew out a packet, which he found to contain a fine gold chain, to which was attached a glass ornament. This he took carefully to the small window of the cabin, where it glistened brilliantly in the sunlight. "It ain't glass," said Rafferty to himself, "it ain't no sort of glass, it's what grand folks—tyrants—call diamonds!" He put it down a little lower, just out of the sun, but the stones still shone, and with even greater brilliancy. He then turned it over, and saw at the back a medallion, in which was a

lock of light chestnut hair. He looked at this with less interest, for ornaments that contained hair were general in those days in all ranks of life. But he, the rough smuggler, might have given more attention to that lock of hair had he known that it once adorned the head of Her Majesty the Queen of France. As it was, he considered that probably it was the hair of his passenger's mother, for was not "Kitty's," his princess's, hair very much the same shade. Looking again at the underclothes, the man's eyes grew even rounder when he saw that they were marked with a crown (crowns and coronets were all the same to Rafferty). Then, realizing that nothing more was to be discovered, he replaced the ornament where he had found it, folded the garments and put all back in the box, which he re-corded carefully. He then turned in to the upper berth, but not to sleep, for he was planning a line of action.

Shifty Raff, as he was called by his fellow-townsmen and sea-mates, was no ordinary man. Though a drunkard, he was crafty; and, though he had no so-called virtues, yet his vices were of that practical kind that made him not only useful to his employers, but admirably able to take care of No. 1. He, unlike some unsatisfactory people, was every one's enemy but his own, for he was prosperous. The small amount of his passenger's luggage offered him no temptation, but it was satisfactory in making him the possessor of their secret standing; and a fine open manifestation of goodwill on his part might result in a really glorious reward for his energy and foresightedness. To his more or less unlettered brain came anecdotes of the young Pretender, and his wanderings in the Highlands, and later on round the South Eastern Coast. "Father had seen him—our rightful king, mind ye—on the shore at Deal. It's in the family to help kings," thought he, "and all will come right for the French royal family yet. Why, that child may be a queen some day!"

And then he lay and planned what he would ask for his reward. It would be so easy; he had only to keep his temper, and the child was so gentle and contented. Yes; he would ask for £1,000 and a ship of his own.

"Then I'll be a fair trader, and go into the East India trade; that will be good enough for me," thought the day dreamer, and while still building castles in the air he fell asleep.

But he was too excited to sleep long. His first thought on waking was for the child's comfort. He got up, looked round, and made his plans. She should have the cabin to herself for the night. Future queens did not slumber in the company of sailors. He could readily say to Pierre that there was no necessity on such a short crossing as this was likely to be for any one to make use of the berths. He and Pierre could take a turn in during the daytime, when "Kitty" would be watching the waves and singing like a mermaid. It would look well, too, when quiet was established in France, and the princess in her palace again; and he seemed to hear her addressing her father the king: "Papa! Captain Rafferty gave me all his ship when he thought me only a sailor's granddaughter; now you must give him a fine ship of his own!" He unfastened the door and joined his passengers and crew.

Gabrielle had ceased singing, but she looked happy and contented. She smiled at once on seeing the Captain, and no wonder, for if he had less than the average the sense of the ridiculous, he made up for it by his appearance; for, with bandy legs, knobbly nose, stubby red hair, round face, and small grey-green eyes, he was personally the very caricature of a man. His personal charms were not enhanced by the scarlet Phrygian cap with which he had been crowned by a patriot at Havre, the ominous character of which he had quite forgotten in his hurried change of political views; in fact, it was so far on the back of his head that he was unconscious of its presence; but seeing the cabin boy look in the direction of where a hat or cap should be, he put his hand hurriedly to his head and drew off, with a start of surprise, the offending head-gear. He looked at it with apparent horror! "Who's been a-dressing up my head with one of these infernal caps?" cried he. "If I find such a one as goes in for these new-fangled ideas on my boat he shall go over-

board, if I hang for it! You rascal, you've done it!" And he advanced threateningly in the direction of the unfortunate lad, who, knowing that Rafferty was quite equal to carrying out his threat, cowered with terror.

But Gabrielle glided between the man and his victim, and with ready wit saved any possible violence by saying, "Captain Rafferty! Bill put that cap on your head to save you from the horrid people who wear them by choice; no one here could ever imagine that any one so kind as you are would wish to put on one," and she drew herself up and said, "I never should!"

That was all Rafferty required, and he became almost effusive in his wish to please. Soon an agreeable smell of cooking pervaded the boat, and when, shortly after, Gabrielle, with an appetite sharpened by the sea air, ate her first dinner of English ham and eggs, she gladly acquiesced in Rafferty's entreaties, and drank some of the wine provided by Pierre.

The afternoon was as fine as the morning, the wind still keeping in their favour. The French coast had long since vanished on the horizon. They passed ships of all classes: brigs, yawls, graceful three-masters, and finally they came upon such stately leviathans that Gabrielle screamed with joy—it was the Channel Fleet. Standing high out of the water the stately three-deckers glided over the waves, their figure-heads gleaming in the sunshine, and the windows of the fore-cabins glistening. Rafferty ordered the man at the helm to steer as near one of them as possible in order to please "Mistress Kitty," and the delighted child saw plainly the nozzles of the cannons and several Jack Tars.

Rafferty took upon himself the rôle of sea mentor, and gave faultlessly the names of the men-of-war.

"Who commands them?" said Pierre.

"Admiral Woodruff," answered Rafferty. "One of our tip-toppers, and not a bad sort, I can tell you! She," he alluded to the fleet, "is on her way to anchor in the Downs; she'll be there to-morrow by daybreak, and we may be three or four hours behind her. Maybe as though she'll be off afore we get there; they may be for going to the Nore."

"How short a time have you known the fleet to remain off Deal?" said Pierre.

"That depends on many circumstances—orders, victualling, and whether they want to take on new hands. I've known her go off in four hours, but," added Rafferty thoughtfully, "now Admiral Woodruff's in command, the flag-ship—that's his ship—may stay longer; for his home is at Folkestone, and he may run over and see his friends."

"Is Folkestone far from Deal?" asked poor anxious Pierre.

"Well, it's a matter of about fifteen miles," answered Rafferty. "You go through Dover, over the cliff to Folkestone." He winked at Pierre as he added, "We do a fine trade there too."

"Ah!" said Pierre. "Do you ever run in cargoes there?"

"The best of our goods, mate; they are all in the trade there, and the coast families have plenty of cash to buy the stuff with in France."

"What's your best cargo?" inquired Pierre.

"Lace, brandy, silks, and gloves. I remember once," said Rafferty, with the air of a conqueror, "taking stuff aboard another of our crafts, larger than the one we're on now, and running over £1,000 of lace. We were nigh nabbed though, and had to fight for it, but we sank the revenue cutter."

"Sank a government cutter! Why, Captain Rafferty, you surprise me!"

"Well," said Rafferty, "that's none of my business, the other chaps did as they were told, and I'm not Captain of the *Sea Witch*," for he reflected that as his passengers were not what he had been led to believe he must be guarded in his information.

So he artfully turned the conversation and began a series of questions as to the cause of the quarrel alluded to by Captain Leblanc, and the possible length of Pierre's residence in England.

Pierre related with admirable skill, to the delight of those of his listeners who understood French, the story of his undoing by a bloodthirsty villain. Rafferty's

eyes gleamed with admiration at the capacity of the Frenchman, but as his plans were to appear to believe everything told him, he simply grasped the speaker by the hand, swearing brotherly love and eternal friendship, and promising to aid him to the best of his ability by getting him "longshore work." Seeing suspicions in his new friend's eyes, for Pierre did suspect him (the carefully bolted door had not escaped notice), and wishing to allay those suspicions, and seeing Gabrielle so much at home, he suggested that Pierre should take a nap of two or three hours on the upper berth, and, to ensure complete privacy, whispered, "Mind ye bolt the door."

Pierre, disarmed by this thoughtful attention, accepted the suggestion, and shortly after was by himself in the cabin. He bolted the door as directed, and after carefully listening for a few minutes, took out from under an old rug or two his box. He looked at it attentively. No! it had apparently not been tampered with, but he would make sure by opening it and looking through the contents. He did so, and found everything just as he had placed it, so he reproached himself for his want of faith, re-corded the box, and turned in.

He was awakened by his little mistress rapping at the door. On opening it he looked around him with amazement, for both sea and sky were a vivid rose colour. It was late evening, so soundly had he slept, and he knew that he was looking at no ordinary sunset. Gabrielle, Rafferty, the crew and the *Saucy Mary* were all transfigured by the same extraordinary tint. He looked around him with astonishment, and then another wonder burst upon his delighted eyes, for flashes of light from the north seemed to radiate the sky in long fan-like rays. These additional splendours were the cause of Gabrielle's delight.

"I wanted to wake you before," she said, "but Captain Rafferty said 'No,' that you would have plenty of time to see the sea when you were helping him sail to-night. But when these wonderful lights came he said I might call you, for even he has never seen anything so fine, though he has often seen the Roarybolle"

(Aurora Borealis) "when whale fishing off Iceland, and," here the excited child grasped Pierre by the hand, "he says, and all the others say, that it is a sign of bloodshed and a fearful war." And she stood on tip-toe and whispered, "Dear papa will be commanding the army, don't you think so, Pierre?"

"My master command an army against Frenchmen! Mademoiselle, never! Never! Be careful, Mademoiselle, and never think of your father as doing anything that would not be for the glory of France."

The rose-coloured waves rolled gently with their crests of seething foam but one shade lighter than the carmine sea; and Gabrielle, as she stood watching, with her thoughts so far away, little thought how true this prophecy would prove; for the sword of France, rebellious but valorous as ever, was unsheathed, and for more than twenty-two years would terrify the world with its daring, though its victories were not to be gained under the command of the little gazer's father. Others, unknown and obscure, were to gather laurels for France, for in a tent far, very far, away, a pale young man too watched the sky and wondered. He pushed aside a little table covered with papers over which he was poring, and hurriedly went outside his tent, disturbing as he did so a boy, who, jumping up, looked with the devotion of a dog into the young officer's face.

Captain Bonaparte, for it was he, put his hand on the boy's shoulder, and said, "Bellais! Look, mon brave! The sky is blood-colour! I have read that in the north it is considered to be a sure forerunner of war, and all the horrors of war!"

"And if it should prove that the omen is true, mon Capitaine," answered Pierre Bellais, "you will find France victorious. And we, we can but give our lives for our land!" And then they too looked long at the crimson sky.

The man spoke again. "I cannot bear to shut out such a wonder, I will leave the tent open. Come in here, lie by my side!" and he pointed to some rugs that lay by the side of his camp bedstead. Then they watched

until sleep overcame them, and the vivid rose-light of the sky painted their sleeping faces.

The man's was magnificent in repose; the features statuesque, and the mighty brow proclaimed no ordinary talents. He murmured broken sentences as he slept. Again and again the boy lifted his head and listened, alarmed at the unrest of his new friend and officer. He caught sometimes a coherent word or sentence: "Victoire! France! Victoire pour la France!" And then the boy slept again.

So the future conqueror of Europe and his gallant coadjutor slumbered side by side on the night when "nature spoke the truth."

And in the cabin of the *Saucy Mary*, snugly tucked in her berth by the attentive Rafferty, a little girl slept peacefully. Her golden curls lay thick on her pillow of purple and scarlet, for the first night she passed out of her own country, Gabrielle de Verminoux slept not only under the flag of England, but on it.

Sleep on, little girl! Sleep on! The bravest of the brave sigh for you; the man and the boy so far away would give their best for you. Your father in his stately mansion waits for you. And you—but in that new land three other hearts as brave, as true, await you, and will love and cherish you until they cease to beat.

CHAPTER VII

THE LANDING

Sleep in peace, and wake in joy; good angels guard thee!
—*Richard III.*

WEARIED by her long vigils Gabrielle slept soundly, and it was eleven o'clock the next morning before she awoke, and then—oh, wonder of wonders!—if the sky had regained its normal aspect, the shores of England, that wonderful island of which she had heard so much, were visible!

Pierre, who was watching by her berth, told her at once this good news, and the joyous and hungry child was soon by the side of Captain Rafferty, entreating him to tell her everything he knew about the coast they were passing.

But that benevolent gem of the first water could, and would, hear of no deviation from the strict path of duty as concerned the well-being of his juvenile passenger. "He was a father!" he announced loudly. The crew could not understand this new rôle—Rafferty as the loving father! Had they been dreaming when they saw and heard their superior officer cuff, thrash and unmercifully badger his own offspring?

Pierre's suspicions were again aroused, when he was talked at by the Captain of the *Saucy Mary* as "one of them as thinks they know everything, but would let a child starve! And never so much as give a thought as to what it had had for its breakfast. Maybe as you can tell me what your grandchild has got inside her this morning, mate?" he cried with assumed indignation. "Not a word more until she takes a bite and a mug of

coffee." And to Pierre's surprise, quite a dainty breakfast was forthcoming for his little charge.

Gabrielle's eyes were full of astonishment, but being as gracious in mind as in person, she felt that Rafferty was one of those human creatures to whom nature had been niggardly by giving him an exterior utterly at variance with the beauties of his mind and heart. "In all this he resembles Madame Annette," thought the unsuspicious child. So her thanks were very prettily given to the wily rascal, and she hastened to eat the good things provided for her by his care, in order to be the sooner by his side.

Her cheeks were brown and rosy with the sea air and exposure, and, though the golden curls were tangled and unbrushed, they still were soft and silky. Rafferty's little eyes gleamed with malice as he thought what fools his mates were not to have seen what he had seen "at a glance, mind ye. That child like us! Why! she is the stuff queens are made of!" Then he thought of thrones; he had never seen one, but as a boy he had attended Upper Deal Church, and, seated in the pilots' gallery there, he had heard the Clergyman read of their magnificence, and then he looked round for something to take the place of one, for the time being, for his princess; but he looked in vain. Finally he doubled up a thick jacket of his own to form a cushion for her to sit on when she rejoined him. He sang as he waited, for we have all of us some redeeming quality, and Rafferty's —in an otherwise absence of any qualities at all, except bad ones—was a magnificent voice, and that gift of his may have had no small share in his undoing. But he sang gloriously for a rough sailor, and now was doing his best as he sang in fine style "Black-eyed Susan," "All in the Downs the Fleet was moored," and though his audience (to the singer it consisted of one) could not understand the beauty of the words, yet she liked the air and the voice of the singer, and listened silently until the unexpected "Adieu" startled her. "Adieu! Adieu!" she cried, and waved her lily-hand; and then the impressionable child joined her voice to that of the man's, and, turning in the direction where

she supposed the coast of France to be, she too sang, "Adieu! Adieu!"

They were the best of friends after that, and Rafferty explained as far as possible their whereabouts. They passed successively Dungeness and the flat coast of Romney Marsh; Hythe with its strange round tower attached to the Church; then the little village of Sandgate enbowered in trees, a lovely sea-side retreat, the Ventnor in those days of the South Eastern Coast; and after that came white cliffs seeming to rise perpendicularly from the sea. On one of them, standing in stately solitude, stood Folkestone Church, and it was with surprise that Pierre and Gabrielle noticed the little town built in a hollow between two cliffs, with a struggling tendency to mount in the direction of the Church. A small stone harbour, too, was noticeable.

Pierre looked at the place with interest. "You told me yesterday," he said to Rafferty, "that your great Admiral lived there," and he pointed to the little town.

"So he does," answered Rafferty, "and I can tell you where, though we can't see the house. His brother's house, where the Admiral makes his home, is near the Church, and is only separated from the Churchyard by a road."

"Not a gay position for a house," said the Frenchman.

"It's a fine comfortable place when once you're in it," said Rafferty, "for it's the back of the house as faces the Churchyard; the quality's rooms look into the garden, a fine one too, I can tell you!"

The *Saucy Mary* bounded over the waves, and soon the lofty splendour of Shakespeare's Cliff was noticed and commented on. The Martello Towers were not built for some years after the period of which we write; but Dover Castle was seen from the sea precisely as at present; and as she passed the Castle Gabrielle turned in the direction of the French coast; and, seeing land across the Channel, asked Rafferty if it could be France? She was surprised by his answering in the affirmative.

More cliffs, and more ships, more ships than Gabrielle could ever have imagined could be together on one part of the sea at once; for there were no steamers in 1792,

all were sailing vessels, and the outward-bounds were waiting for a favourable wind to take them down Channel; and these merchantmen, as they were called, were in some cases surrounded by small boats.

As the *Saucy Mary* neared Deal, Pierre noticed that the Fleet with furled sails lay at anchor just opposite the town; and, if the merchant ships were surrounded by boats of every description, the men-of-war had three times as many round them. Voices could be heard shouting orders, for the decks were crowded; bands were playing on board the ships, and the scene was most brilliant and animated. From Deal, Walmer and Sandown Castles, flags were flying, and the flat beach of Deal seemed crowded with sightseers.

All at once a gun was fired from Deal Castle and was answered almost immediately from the flagship, *The Royal George*, and the crew of a smart-looking craft which had been lying beside her lifted their oars, a flag was hoisted from her stern, and the Admiral was seen to descend and get on board her. Without a moment's hesitation the oars struck the water and the boat shot through the waves in the direction of the shore. But even in that short moment Gabrielle had recognized the face and uniform of her old friend, but, taught reticence by adversity, she said nothing.

Rafferty hailed a row-boat that passed near them and asked how long the Fleet would be likely to remain. The answer was that it would leave shortly, as the Admiral had only just gone on shore to receive fresh orders that had just arrived by a special messenger from London. "There is trouble somewhere," shouted the man. "Did you not see the sky last night?"

Rafferty was bold in his advance among the representatives of marine law and order; for once he was running a fair cargo, and was about to invite inspection both of it and his craft.

He told Pierre that he would send him on shore at once, as then he would land unobserved, and by mingling with the crowd attract no notice from the authorities. He arranged a meeting-place, and volunteered to take care of their modest luggage. He

kindly bade them *au revoir*, and assisted his little friend to get into the boat which had come alongside for the fugitives.

Pierre's eyes glistened at the early prospect of meeting the Admiral, for he had dreaded a long period of suspense. So his farewells to Rafferty were sincere, and he pressed a small coin into his hand in order to pay for the extra expense of the row-boat. But to his astonishment it was returned as secretly as it was offered, while the smuggler whispered, " It's been a pleasure to me and mates to have that there child aboard. Remember as she has a friend, though humble, in Deal ! Keep your money yourself, you'll want it fine maybe." A minute after and some yards separated the two boats.

Again, it was a novel experience for Gabrielle ; for there is a difference between the motion of a sailing-boat and that of a row-boat ; but she was equal to any change of motion on sea, and positively enjoyed the change, and was not her friend on shore ? Her friend who loved her, and who would soon take her to her mother ? So it was no wonder that Gabrielle's cheeks were flushed and her dark blue eyes radiant with pleasure. Each stroke of the oars was taking her nearer to happiness.

The crowds on the beach cheered some one, and then remained silent, so the landing of two such miserable looking travellers was quite unnoticed.

The boat was beached in the usual way ; the sailors and Pierre jumped on shore and gave the boat a pull beachwards, and then Pierre lifted out his little charge, who stood for some moments quite bewildered. But her faithful attendant took her by the hand and joined the crowd that stood patiently awaiting the return of the Admiral. They stood near where the gates of Deal Pier now stand ; then, as at present, Beach Street consisted of a long line of houses facing the sea ; one or two of the original houses remain to this day, but little changed by the ravages of more than a hundred years.

To Gabrielle, accustomed to the palaces of a great city, or her father's picturesque Château, Deal presented but an unpretending aspect ; with some differences, it seemed to her but a large seafaring village,

and its inhabitants worthy, doubtless, but primitive. Their costume, too, was not that to which she had been accustomed. But she noticed with relief one or two officers whose uniform was almost the same as that worn by her friend, the Admiral.

The beauty of the child was soon noticed by the bystanders, and one or two ladies spoke kindly to her. To these advances, as she could not answer in English, she did in French, and courtesied with such grace that to Pierre's annoyance quite a crowd collected round them. But his annoyance was not of long duration, for soon he heard a boy cry out "They're a-coming!" and he pressed forward as quickly as he could.

Admiral Woodruff walked briskly, accompanied by a civilian who seemed to be still impressing upon his companion some very important news. The Admiral, in his white knee breeches, blue coat with a star upon his breast, gold epaulets, powdered hair, pigtail, and three-cornered hat, was an ideal English Admiral. He looked kindly at the crowd and was on the point of again acknowledging its welcome, when he saw a strangely-dressed little girl rush from between some sailors in his direction, calling as she did so: "My English papa! My good English papa! I am here, your own Kitty!" But his astonishment was hardly equal to that of the crowd's when it saw Admiral Woodruff lift the little girl in his arms and kiss her over and over again.

Taking advantage of the stupefaction of those around him, Pierre pushed forward and stood beside the Admiral, who exclaimed, "Pierre! What is this?"

The man pointed in the direction of his heart, and shook his head, unnoticed by his little mistress, and said in French, "Mademoiselle's mother sends her to you to take care of until she sends for her."

The gentleman dressed as a civilian opened his eyes in even wider astonishment than before, but on second thoughts discreetly looked away.

"I have but a moment to give you, Pierre," said the Admiral; "I have received orders of the greatest importance. But I can write a few lines to my sister-

in-law ; she will receive my darling and take care of her until I return. Here, Granville, give me the sheet of paper I wrapped my despatches in, and will you hold this little hand " (he again kissed the child as he put her on the ground) " while I speak to her servant ? Refugees from unhappy France, of course."

The Admiral took Pierre aside, and the latter with the utmost brevity told of the fearful tragedy, and the defenceless position of his orphaned charge. Tears coursed down the brave sailor's cheeks as he looked at the forlorn little creature waiting so patiently for his verdict. Again and again he shook Pierre by the hand ; wrote a short letter which he gave him with a few instructions, and then returned to Gabrielle and pressed her once more to his heart, saying, " Your English father, indeed. No child has a father who could love her more than you are loved ! Good-bye, my pet, but not for long. Pierre, I have no time now, but your troubles are ended. Among my people you will be honoured as your faithful service merits. Good-bye for the present ! " and, brushing the tears hastily from his eyes, he went down the beach, and soon was on the sea.

Pierre lifted Gabrielle in his arms, and together they watched the pinnace until it gained the flagship. Gabrielle, who for a moment had thought all her wanderings over, wept so bitterly that the crowd, though slightly scandalized at such an unusual occurrence, gathered in sympathy round the refugees, and Pierre would have been at his wits' end had not Mr. Granville come to his assistance. The latter undertook to inform the bystanders that " the young lady and her servant had escaped with the greatest difficulty from Paris, where they had been in danger of losing their lives, and that they were now on their way to Folkestone, where Miss Woodruff would be taken care of by her aunt," and the speaker added, " that he hoped all the Englishmen and women who were present at the pathetic meeting would remember that the father of the little girl was now on his way to do his best for England, and that until more was known of this unexpected

arrival all tongues would be silent, and suspicions (wholly unfounded) not given a moment's thought." A good English cheer for Admiral Woodruff and his daughter Kitty was the outcome of this speech, in which it must be admitted that the speaker jumped too quickly at extraordinary conclusions.

After this, Mr. Granville took Gabrielle by the hand and led her to Deal Castle, where the news of her strange advent had preceded her. Some gentlemen there did their best to comfort the weeping child; a lady knelt by her side, but Gabrielle was heartbroken, and though she astonished her audience by her stately manners she could not find a smile. Mr. Granville remarked that the Admiral's daughter was a "Princess of tears"; but the host, Lord X., said indignantly, "Hold your tongue, Granville, you don't know what you are implying!" and, wrapping the little girl in a warm shawl, he carried her to the carriage which was waiting to convey the refugees to Folkestone.

He kissed her kindly when he said good-bye, but he noticed with astonishment that his kisses surprised her, and that a tiny sunburnt hand was extended. Seeing this, he good-naturedly bent and kissed it, and then he realized that whoever the child might be it had been her hand, not her cheeks, that had been kissed by strangers; and the nobleman thought, with more good sense than the rash Granville:

"Child, indeed! She is no child of Woodruff's! Well, his business is none of mine; evidently he has told them to hold their tongues." Then he motioned to the coachman to drive away.

CHAPTER VIII

ALAS ! POOR RAFFERTY !

All men are not alike ; alas, good neighbour !
—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

THERE was so much cheering on shore, that Rafferty, who had anchored the *Saucy Mary*, saw no necessity for remaining on board her when evidently so much was going on in the town. After a few instructions to his crew (the necessity of which we shall observe later) he secured the services of a boat returning from one of the merchantmen, and shortly was on his way to the beach.

He passed the Admiral's pinnace, and looked long and admiringly at that gallant officer and hard fighter. With the longshoremen who were rowing he cheered " the sea lion," as he called Admiral Woodruff, not that they got any recognition for their attentions ; for, as one and all remarked in the row-boat, " the Admiral looked downright bad, as though he had been struck sudden-like," and as one with sharper eyes than his mates swore, " as though he had been crying."

" You land lubber ! Cry ! A sailor cry ! Take that for insulting of as brave a sailor as we old English have ! " and some small portable article was flung with a blasphemous adjective at the sharp-sighted speaker's face.

"You'd better keep a civil tongue, mate," said the owner of the row-boat ; " such talk may do aboard your *Saucy Mary*, but you ain't Captain on this 'ere boat. So keep civil like, or I'll make ye ! "

Rafferty curbed his lips, otherwise the reply that was on the point of issuing from them might have provoked

more words and possibly "ructions" on shore; so he sat silent, and heard to his surprise more cheering on shore.

"They are at it again," he said apologetically to the owner of the boat. The latter, glad to make peace, said, "Won't be long as we shall know all about it." Then there came yet another cheer; a perfect roar of cheering followed; and then there was quiet.

By this time they had reached the beach. After dragging up their boat and placing her in safety, the party joined a group of the sailors who then (as now) were always on the beach, looking out for something to do and doing nothing. But at the moment when Rafferty joined these "pals," they were talking in a most excited manner.

"What's up, mates?" cried the new-comers with one voice, for the Captain of the *Saucy Mary* had been followed by his late companions. "What's up? A mighty lot of cheering we've heard. Ain't war, is it? Ain't the King down to see our Admiral, is it?"

"No!" roared the loudest voiced of the longshoremen, in order to prevent interruption by those as well informed as himself. "It's all about a little gal, as handsome as paint, as has come with a Frenchy and says as she is the Admiral's gal, and that he is her English pa."

The Admiral her English pa? Rafferty stood dumbfounded! Give the smuggler his due, he was not taken in for an instant; but his heart went down, and the possibility of the Admiral's interference with his prospects was, to say the least of it, not reassuring.

"And what did the Admiral do?" cried he, in a voice the volume of which we have before noticed at Havre. "What did the Admiral say?"

"Why," said the man, "took her in his arms and was a-kissing of her wild with joy like. And then the Frenchy came behind her, a-pointing to his heart as is their ways, and says something to the Admiral in their jargon, as we honest English folks don't understand."

"My!" says Rafferty. "Go on."

"And then he was a-kissing of her again, and says,

in English, mind ye, to a gent from London who is called Granville, 'Hold this little hand, will you, Granville? while I say a few words to her servant.' Servant, I tell you! The Frenchy was the servant of that little girl, who might have been a gipsy lass, though not favouring such folks in her looks, for she is as fair a lass as may be seen any day."

"Go on," said Rafferty.

"And the Admiral he spoke that quiet like to the Frenchy, and though they stood as nigh me and my mates"—pointing to his companions—"we could not make out what they said; that was maybe 'cos they talked their lingo. Oh, he is a man, our Admiral! And then he began to blub. Yes; began to cry, man, like a lass, and wrote a letter to his friends at Folkestone, and gave it to the Frenchy!"

Rafferty's companions did not let this pass without comment. "What did our Bill tell ye then?"

But Rafferty was too excited to resent this remark; he only said, "Blub! Why I should as soon have thought as I should blub as our Admiral! Well, go on!"

"And then," continued the narrator, who, as he was really satisfying his audience by the lucidity of his communications, was allowed to proceed without interruption, "he comes back to the little gal, saying of 'Your English pa, indeed! No child has got a pa as loves her more than I do you!' And then he goes in for a shaking of that Frenchy's hand wild like, saying as he had been a good and faithful servant, and that he would be valued as sich in his home, and that he would be back there as soon as them villains the French would let him."

"Forgetting, maybe, as the Frenchy was a Frenchman," remarked a bystander.

"No," said the original speaker, "maybe as he did not say that at all. And then he kisses his little gal over and over again, says something to the gentleman as was walking with him afore the gal spoke to him, and then goes down to that there pinnace still a-blubbing."

"And then——" cried all the new-comers with one voice.

"Well, the little gal cried that piterful as we was a-doing our best to comfort her, when up speaks that London chap as says that such as we English folks as has seen the "—here the speaker hesitated for a moment —"pathetic meeting must remember as the young lady's father was on the point of a-fighting like for his country, and as when he come back he would let us know all about it, and his a-marrying of a French hussy."

"Hold hard!" said a man beside the orator. "He didn't say 'hussy.'"

"What did he say, then?" shouted that worthy. "As you know such a jolly sight more than I do, just you go on with your jaw."

The next speaker was more accurate, and told in very much the same words what Granville really did say: "As how the young lady had come from France where they was all a-murdering of one another. And as how they were a-going to the Admiral's home in Folkestone, where Miss Woodruff—Miss Woodruff, mind ye—would be looked after by her aunt; and as how we were not to talk suspicious like until he was back as could fight his own battles a jolly sight better than us folks at Deal."

"Hold your tongue, you ignorant grampus!" said the first speaker.

What might have followed history must unfortunately fail to relate, for Rafferty, who was always on the alert, noticed a hurried movement on the part of many of the bystanders, and joined them. As they went along he asked the reason of their haste, and what they expected to see.

A man near answered, "We are off to the Castle; the Admiral's little daughter is there; and Lord X.'s carriage is to take her to Folkestone at once, and we want to see her start."

Rafferty trotted along as fast as his bandy legs would let him, congratulating himself on one thing, "he had been kind, and the child liked him! Yes! it would all come right in the end, and he had her box in safety. Even if he was nabbed that was safe," for Rafferty was one who always looked ahead, as all skilful commanders should.

On arriving at the Castle (unchanged to this day) he waited as near the drawbridge as possible. Very shortly a carriage with an outrider made its appearance; a manservant sat behind in the rumble. Then the Castle door opened and the Warden, Lord X., came across the drawbridge carrying the little girl; Pierre and several gentlemen followed. The nobleman put the child in the carriage, Pierre seated himself by the manservant, and Rafferty with his own green-grey eyes more astonished than ever, saw the Warden first kiss "Kitty's," his princess's, cheek, and then her hand. After that the carriage drove away.

That night there was nothing else talked of in the *Jolly Sailor*, that favourite hostel of the sea-dogs; and Rafferty swore by all that was in the sea and out of it that "the child was no more the Admiral's than his!" And he slapped his hand on his thigh—a favourite action of his when he wished to be impressive—and looked so knowing that he succeeded in getting quite a number of adherents to his way of thinking. So on the all-important question of parentage, Deal did not agree with Folkestone, that is to say the sea-faring population did not; and this far-sightedness on the part of the sea-dogs had a very important bearing on the subsequent events of this history.

But in the very midst of these heated arguments, surrounded by admirers of his daring and success, Nemesis, in the form of a preventive officer, was to change all this festivity into seclusion and gloom. And for what?

That successful encounter with the revenue cutter had been by no means forgotten by the authorities, and Rafferty's presence on board the *Sea Witch* was now proved without the shadow of a doubt, and before the clients of the *Jolly Sailor* knew where they were their hero was "nabbed as crafty as you like!" for the preventive officer was supported by ten of his men, and all were armed. A rescue being not only impossible, but likely to do Rafferty's case more harm than good, he was allowed to depart peaceably, with many assurances of his innocence and ability to prove that, though on

the *Sea Witch*, it was as a bound prisoner. He allowed the handcuffs to be put on, and then with a downcast face marched as directed by the preventive men. He asked humbly if he might say a word to a mate who was present. Consent being given, he said ambiguously, "Do your best for the poor, Tom!" and then was hurried to the Town Hall, as it was too late in the evening to start for Sandwich jail.

And Tom did "look after the poor," for he slipped out of the *Jolly Sailor* before one could count ten, and silently in the darkness gained the *Saucy Mary*, and, after taking possession of the wooden box, rowed back to shore as silently as he had rowed from it. But he did not land at Deal; he rowed further down, and eventually beached at Walmer. Leaving his boat in the care of a "pal," who undertook to row it back to Deal, Tom shouldered the box and carried it to Upper Deal, to the "fine house" we have heard of before.

Evidently he knew the ways and by-ways of the place, for he deposited his load in an out-house and then boldly rapped at the back door. It was opened by a man-servant.

"To see the master," said Tom.

"All right!" said the man, "come in."

The sailor waited some time in the hall; at last an old gentleman joined him and looked in a peculiar manner at his visitor; the latter returned the look respectfully, and said, "You will do your best for the poor?"

"Of course, of course, Tom," answered the old gentleman.

"I shall come again and ask what you will give me," said Tom.

"That's right. Have you had supper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you have some more? Good evening," and the old gentleman went into the dining-room.

Tom remained in the kitchen five minutes, not longer, then bade "Good-night." Before he left the premises, however, he gave one parting look into the out-house—the box was gone!

He walked back through the meadows to Deal, and

reached the sea-front to hear that the *Saucy Mary* had been taken by the authorities, and nothing—not even the wearing apparel of the crew was to be touched. "What a shave I have had of it!" said Tom to himself. "Well, the box is safe, and Raff will be as good to me one of these days perhaps. I wonder what he has got in it though?" For none of the crew had seen the arrival of Pierre and the child; they had been in the cabaret, and did not leave it until long after Rafferty had conducted his passengers on board, so the fact of their having any luggage whatever was unknown to any one but "Shifty Raff."

That worthy's night was indeed a terrible one. Prisons in those days merited the aversion they inspired. In this humane epoch we may go to too great an extreme in making them comfortable. With heated cells, spotless cleanliness, sanitary conveniences, comfortable beds and warm bed-clothing, a night in prison, if the conscience of the prisoner be fairly clear, must be delightful to any one not accustomed to the luxuries before enumerated. But in 1792 a prison cell was unfit for a wild animal, much less a human creature. Straw was a luxury, and the sanitary conveniences usual in these days did not exist.

So Rafferty sat in misery, longing for the morning when he hoped to clear himself of the terrible charge, for it was a hanging matter that he was imprisoned for —no wonder he looked with horror upon the future. He would do his best, and perhaps he too might hear the welcome "We will do our best for the poor," for if again at liberty he had it in his power to do many a good turn to those who could help him if they would.

"Them chaps as is sure to be hung might say a good word for me if they was let know as I am nabbed," thought he.

The night passed in this ceaseless weighing of possibilities and probabilities. At one moment he was hopeful, at another his forebodings were of the most dismal nature. He grew wild with horror, and his surroundings were not of a nature to reassure him; rats he knew were about, though too well fed to be danger-

ous; and then there was the stench—and to a sailor, of all men, contaminated air is most obnoxious. "These men who go down into the sea, and see the wonders of the great deep" are those who breathe the purest air and positively detest stuffiness. He wished that he had been a better man, a fair trader, or in the navy; and then the bully fairly did what he never thought a man could do—"blubbed!" But his tears, unlike the Admiral's that were shed for his murdered friends and their orphaned child, flowed for the only cause that such as Rafferty's ever flow—self, personal pain, or mental fear, for the smuggler did not know what fear was in any other sense. To die fighting was nothing, but to be hanged in cold blood was quite another thing—he trembled with horror, his teeth chattered. It was no use wondering any longer, he thought, and then he began all the pros and cons over again.

The next morning, when they opened the cell door, the very warder staggered (knocked back, as he said, by the stink), and the fallen tyrant, after a mug of small beer (very small) and a hunch of bread, was marched off to Sandwich.

The route chosen was that through the Sandhills, now well known to golfers, as two fashionable clubs, the St. George's and the Deal, have fine links there. In 1792, sheep and cattle were pastured there in the various marshes, and it was a wild, desolate district, and one generally avoided after sunset. It was very rough walking, too, all ups and downs, and even dangerous from the rabbit holes often unseen in the long wiry grass. The tide was low, so after a very short time the officer in command of the escort ordered it and the prisoner to go down to the shore and walk on the sand. They did so.

As Rafferty, who, more dead than alive, marched unwillingly but outwardly respectful, passed a clump of the rushes which grow in wild profusion near the shore, a child sang, and he heard with delight the longed-for words: "If we can't do much, if we can't do much, we will do our best for the poor," and again the tears were very near falling.

Poor Rafferty, he resembled the majority, and without doubt was a fine specimen of his class! "I" meant to him the universe, as perhaps it does to many more than the ignorant bully whose vices we so much deplore.

In any case Rafferty was so fortunate as to escape the much dreaded gallows, for one of the men who had been convicted, and who, with three more of the crew of the *Sea Witch* was hanged, did sware by all that was holy that on that memorable night when His Majesty King George's revenue cutter was sunk by the *Sea Witch*, Shifty Raff, the prisoner Rafferty, was lying bound and wounded at the bottom of the *Sea Witch*, and that the afore-mentioned wounds had been received while endeavouring to fight on the side of His Majesty and his servants.

But, for all that, the jury were not to be completely bamboozled, and though they gave a verdict of "Not guilty" on the main charge, their verdict was "Guilty" on a lesser one, and our unworthy acquaintance—we can hardly call him friend—was shortly on the sea again. But not on the *Saucy Mary*, nor on that graceful three-master, the gift of a king, on which as Captain he was to sail to the East, to that India where the Captains of merchantmen became nabobs. No, daydreams do not always become realities, and Rafferty's cell on a convict ship was not equal to the Captain's cabin on that ship of his dreams—she had already been named the *Princess Kitty*.

Here we must leave him, but he will again join us, though that fortunate meeting will not be for some years. Rafferty did so well as a convict—not nobly, but sagaciously—by keeping the authorities up to all the dodges of his fellow prisoners, and was so artful and accurate in the information he gave, that after eight years he was pardoned and sent home; and so had adversity and discipline modified his vices, that he came back a wiser and a better man, and, though still a rascal, no longer a dangerous one.

CHAPTER IX

4, CHURCH STREET, FOLKESTONE

She was beloved by a', my lassie,
She was beloved by a',
But an angel fell in love wi' her,
An' took her frae us a'.

—*A. Cunningham.*

CAPTAIN JOHN WOODRUFF'S house was like many of the houses of the time of which we write—not detached. It was one of a street of houses in which there were no shops. These houses did not resemble one another in size, architecture, nor even in the colour of the bricks with which they were built. They had one feature in common, that the entrance door opened directly on to the street. In the handsomer houses this abruptness was modified by two steps which had on either side posts with chains, but this was the exception, not the rule. For, two feet from the houses, very small boulders of two colours, dark grey and light grey, and forming a design, notified to the passers-by that the pavement which joined them was for their use, and that impious feet were not to defile their slightly knobbly exclusiveness. Shutters, as a rule painted green, were *de rigueur*, and short blinds—in the less pretending houses, of muslin ; in the larger, of wire—secured the privacy which it would otherwise have been impossible to attain.

Though the exteriors of these houses were unpretending, the interiors were as a rule most comfortable and commodious, for no good house in 1792 was without its roomy attics, in which were servants' bedrooms, apple rooms, box rooms, with their storage of sometimes three

or four generations, and all sorts of odd corners for which there was generally some use found.

In these houses lived the local gentry, the clergyman, the lawyer, the doctor, and retired military or naval officers whose families lived in the neighbourhood; and they formed the society of the place and in a sense led both the fashion and local opinion. With the exception of the naval or military heroes, few of these worthy people had ever wandered far from their birthplace; consequently, though they were contented, their mental vision was limited, and conversation among the ladies decidedly domestic. But these deficiencies were entirely balanced by their many virtues, and the noble example they gave both to their sons and to their daughters of truthfulness, chastity, and sobriety; and it is to these wholesome ancestors of ours that we as a nation owe our prosperity of to-day.

Among these houses, Captain John Woodruff's had not only the proud distinction of being the largest, but also the justifiable pride of harbouring two gallant sailors —or perhaps it should be said three—for the only son of the Captain had joined the navy, and was as smart a young midshipman as one would wish to see. Passers-by looked with respect upon its snowy steps, and the bright brass knobs by which its chains were attached to the posts on either side of the entrance door, of which the handle shone like burnished gold. There were five windows on each side of it, and eleven on the upper story, and, in the slightly pointed roof, five projecting attic windows; and, as Rafferty had described, all these windows looked upon the old Church with its peaceful graveyard; but use is second nature, and Folkestone was renowned for its salubrity, and the old age attained by its inhabitants fully justified that renown. But for all that, the rooms occupied by the quality looked into gardens more or less beautiful. On the garden fronts of these houses vines were trained, and with the grapes grown on them our great grandmothers and their maids decocted wine known as grape wine, to distinguish it from the other beverages, in which the juice of the grape was unknown.

On entering, the visitor stood in a large square hall, the museum of the house, for it was there that the curiosities brought home by the master of the house and his brother were placed. Curiously carved furniture, and immense china vases, gave it quite an Eastern appearance, and the walls were literally covered with trophies from all lands. On the right hand was the butler's pantry, and, on the left, a smoking-room ; the windows of these rooms, and those of the hall, looked streetwards. A narrow passage divided the house lengthways, and the doors of the reception rooms opened into it, but the dining-room door could be seen from the hall, consequently from the entrance, and it was in the dining-room that Mrs. Woodruff and her son were standing on that memorable September evening when the joy of her existence, and the love of the boy's life, came to them as though from the sky.

Elizabeth Woodruff was a pretty-looking woman of about thirty-three, not tall, but of medium height ; her unpowdered hair was of a lovely dark chestnut colour ; her eyes brown and sorrowful ; and the ribbons on her white dress were black, for even in healthy Folkestone children were sometimes taken from their earthly homes, and in an upstairs room in No. 4, Church Street, were cupboards and drawers full of dainty clothing that their little owner would never wear again. For Jack, the brave midshipman, had not always been an only child ; a little sister five years his junior had once monopolized his holidays, and her loss was the only trouble he had ever known.

As he watched his mother, standing, as he did, leaning on her shoulder, he noticed the change that one sorrowful year had brought with it, and he wondered if she would ever be the same bright playful mother that she used to be. He had been at sea on his first voyage when his darling Kitty had sickened, and, to the inexpressible grief of his father and mother, died. The poor lad could hardly believe that she would never return to them. Everything seemed as it used to be, only a greater silence reigned in the house which had once resounded to her merry laughter, for Kitty had been his

father's "mad-cap," and her merry voice shouting, "I am Kitty, an English girl! God save King George!" had made the old house ring with joy. The tears which he valiantly repressed as a brave sailor should, were very nearly flowing, but he mastered his emotion in order to try and make his mother smile. And he did succeed in bringing gentle motherly smiles of pride when he spoke of his first engagement, and what his feelings had been when under fire. His wound, too, not quite healed, made Mrs. Woodruff grateful that, had she lost a beloved child, yet one still was left her; and she looked with pride and thankfulness at the sling which supported her boy's arm, and smiled with pleasure at the knowledge that that wound would keep him at her side for the next six months.

"Come round the garden with me, mother, will you?" he asked gently, "for we have had no time to see anything to-day, Uncle George kept us all so busy. They are off by now. Dear uncle, he is as kind as he is brave! Mother, ought we not to be proud of having such a hero in the family?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Woodruff, "he has a heart of gold. May he long be spared, both to us and to his country!"

Jack answered with the confidence of youth. "Mother, he bears a charmed life! They told me on board that uncle has stood commanding in full sight of the enemy, and bullets and cannon balls have rattled past him. Three times his hat has been perforated with shot. Mother, sailors say there is a lot in luck—I am not so lucky as uncle, but think of poor Charley Scott! He was only a month older than I am, mother, and joined when I did; he was my friend too; the first shot did for him. He was standing beside me and I saw him fall, but I could do nothing for him, for the next volley brought me down, and I remember no more. But uncle has never been wounded."

"Jack! Jack!" answered Mrs. Woodruff, "do not speak with such confidence. Prosperity does not last for ever, we must all have our share of woe. For a

time all may seem sunshine, but the brightest lives have sometimes the direst endings, and your uncle may not always escape scatheless from the perils associated with his profession, and these are such dangerous times! Wars and rumours of still greater wars make poor wives and mothers tremble."

"And sisters-in-law too!" said Jack. "But, mother, cheer up! I shall be here to take care of you for the next six months!"

His mother kissed him, and then they walked into the garden. Among the many changes effected by the march of time and progress the most delightful perhaps, and the least fraught with deteriorating influences, is the vast improvement in horticulture, and the marvels it has effected in the cultivation of flowers. A hundred or more years ago the gardens were, in many cases, in classical style and really beautifully laid out; the lawns were level, and exquisitely mown and swept, guiltless of daisies too—that favourite and much-sung flower of poets, but one detested by gardeners. Summer-houses or bowers were artistically built and placed in points of vantage. Trees and shrubs, the latter being in many cases admirably pruned into various strange devices, were planted with much taste; but spring, with its wealth of natural flowers, and exquisite flowering trees, among which the crimson and white thorns were not the least beautiful, and early summer, with its pinks, irises, roses, peonies, and other old-world flowers, being past, there was not much left to make a garden gay with that profusion of bloom to which we are accustomed during the months of August and September. Stray flowers there were, of course, but no masses of colour, and Mrs. Woodruff looked vainly for something really nice. At last she was successful, for the China roses, those artistic and fragrant old favourites, blooming under favourable circumstances nine months out of the twelve, had something to offer their mistress, and she crossed the lawn in order to gather some, Jack regretting, as she did so, his inability to aid her.

"You know who they are for, Jack," said his mother, "they are for you to take over there!" and she pointed

in the direction of the Church. "Poor Kitty loved those roses."

"Mother," said the boy, "Kitty would be so unhappy if she knew that you grieved so. She never liked you to look sad. You and I must try to be as happy as she would wish us to be—not that the house can ever be the same without her. Thank you," he said a moment later, "it is a beautiful bunch, and I shall be able to place it myself. I can carry it, look! But we must tie the stems together. Come, mother!" and they returned into the dining-room.

As they did so, the noise of carriage wheels was heard coming in the direction of the house and, to Mrs. Woodruff and Jack's surprise, the carriage seemed to stop before their door. A rap given in fine style was the next intimation, and voices were heard speaking.

"It can't be Uncle George back again!" said Jack, "no such luck!" he added; and then the manservant Collins opened the door wide, and the strangest of visions burst upon their eyes.

The front door faced the west; it was open, and the sunset had been a very beautiful one. Standing in the middle of the hall, with the rosy golden light behind her, stood a little girl, about eight years of age, with matted golden curls, and a lovely tear-stained face. The light behind her made the golden curls form a very halo, and her expression was at once pleading and uncertain.

Jack, with his bunch of roses in his hand, stood bewildered by his mother's side; neither moved. It was the strange vision who came forward, courtesying gracefully, and saying with a soft foreign accent, "I am Kitty, an English girl. God save King George!"

"I am Kitty!" and honest Jack Woodruff, without another thought, threw his bunch of roses at the stranger's feet. What magic words were those! for Mrs. Woodruff was kneeling by the child's side crying, "My darling! my darling! where do you come from?" and she looked round her for information.

"The young lady's servant is here, ma'am," said Collins. "He brings you a letter from the Admiral."

With the little stranger on her knees, Mrs. Woodruff opened the letter so hastily written by her brother-in-law. It consisted of a few words only :—

"DEAR BESSIE,—

"I send you this dear child. Her mother (unknown to her) was murdered on the 10th of last month. Do your best for her, for she is very dear to me. Put the man into black livery; you will find one I ordered for Sinclair, it can be made to fit. I shall be over in a few days and will explain all. Love my Kitty for my sake, and for her defenceless, friendless position, now she has only me to befriend her.

"GEORGE."

Kitty! Another Kitty! And even to the broken-hearted mother a more beautiful, bewitching Kitty than her own—a defenceless, orphaned child, dressed in almost beggar's garb, unhappy, wandering, motherless! No wonder that that empty place in Elizabeth Woodruff's heart was occupied at once. No wonder that in one brief moment the new Kitty, sent she felt sure by Providence, was accepted as a gift sent direct from Heaven. She kissed her new treasure over and over again, while Jack did his best to gain information from Pierre. But the latter did not quite understand what he was to say. Pierre's fault was a sometimes strained reticence, well known among his own friends and relations; he was not direct, and this peculiarity was the origin of his nickname, "the Wily"; and he had not understood in his short interview with the Admiral if he were to announce to the latter's family the rank and name of his beloved mistress. So he simply resolved to let the Admiral do that when he returned home. Understanding English—though imperfectly—and hearing Mrs. Woodruff read the letter aloud to her son, he observed that the Admiral made no allusion whatever to the child's parentage, and that all explanations were to be given by him personally. This quite settled the point—they were to keep silent—and, unobserved, he bent and whispered these directions to his charge.

Then there was a perfect turmoil in the house. Candles,

for it was getting dark, were lighted, and seen by the curious—of which, as in all small towns, Folkestone had even more than its share—for the coachman had not failed to impart to one or two cronies the extraordinary news of the abrupt appearance of "Miss Woodruff," and the Admiral's delight and grief at her arrival; and they had not only listened with bated breath, but, taking advantage of monuments more pretentious than the ordinary head stones usual in a Churchyard, used them as shelters, behind which they were able to watch the movements in the house. These lights were observed as servants prepared rooms for the new arrivals. Mrs. Woodruff, assisted by her lost child's nurse, was in one of these rooms, and—oh! had but the watchers known it—her face was glowing with pleasure! She was kneeling beside a chest of drawers, and the floor and chairs near her were covered with little dresses and underclothes for her new Kitty—for the Kitty who had been sent to comfort her. Maids were carrying down to the kitchen to be aired by its fire the mattresses and feather bed belonging to a small bedstead. Hot water was already waiting by the side of a bath in readiness for the wondering child. Half an hour afterwards both mistress and nurse were assisting at her toilette—very necessary, as since Gabrielle had left the care of good Madame Annette it had not received the slightest attention. Bathed, and clothed in dainty, though plain underclothes, later on Gabrielle stood by Mrs. Woodruff's side, while she and Martha did their best to disentangle the golden curls. They chatted gaily to one another as they did so, astonished both at their profusion and silky fineness.

A little white dress was found among the many spread around them that fitted fairly well, and by eight o'clock Jack—who had been waiting in the hall, as Collins said afterwards, "as a lover for his lass"—saw descending the stairway, holding his mother's hand, a fairy queen. As she neared the bottom stair the fairy dropped the welcoming hand and advanced, as he thought, in his direction. But her eyes were fixed, not on the boy, but on the bunch of roses he had thrown at her feet in his chivalrous welcome. They had been picked up by

Pierre and laid upon a carved Chinese table standing near. Gabrielle, or Kitty, as we must call her now, passed Jack, took the roses in her hand, and with them retraced her steps, looked at him with smiling eyes, and standing on tiptoe threw her arms round his neck.

From the moment that the lad felt those childish arms, with the bunch of roses, his gift of welcome, forming as it were a clasp behind him, into his noble heart came the crowning love and glory of his life, for Jack Woodruff's heart never knew but the love of two women—one was his mother, and the other—but we must not anticipate.

Flushed, and flattered by this proof of confidence in the fairy, Jack led her into the dining-room where supper was awaiting them.

On either side of Mrs. Woodruff's seat at the head of the table Collins had placed a chair, as it used to be before the house had been shadowed. The boy and the girl seated themselves gravely, but not before Jack's "Queen of Hearts" had made a salutation to his mother, of the grace of which for long years the gaping servants were never wearied of talking. And these humble friends, for they one and all reverenced their mistress, heard with joy the merry chatter as in old times; for Kitty, if she could not speak English, did her best to try, and repeatedly toasted King George, and then they, mother and son, fairly worshipped her.

It was almost a procession when the fairy retired for the night, for Collins and the women servants all assembled in the hall to bid good-night, and their ideas of behaviour—otherwise deportment—were much edified by the graceful acknowledgment they received for their attention—"courtesied to us as if we were lords and ladies" was the verdict given to the astonished townsfolk when the arrival of the fairy was commented on. Jack headed the procession, carrying in his unwounded hand a silver candlestick, then came the fairy and Mrs. Woodruff, and Martha, who was to resume her old functions. More "good-nights," and the gallant candle-bearer came down the stairs, three steps at a time in the exuberance of his joy, to join Pierre in the butler's pantry, to try if possible to find out more.

From that worthy he could gain nothing, but Collins had learnt as much as the coachman could tell him, and that little information he gave to his young master : his uncle's joy at seeing the little girl, her addressing him as her " father," and the purport of Mr. Granville's speech. " The young lady is your cousin, I am sure, sir."

His cousin ! A cousin to take the place of a sister ! " No, never ! " thought the lad. " Never quite the same place, but to make up for our loss. And named Kitty too ! Sent to make us all happy again ! "

Then he thought of Pierre's livery. " He is to have Sinclair's new suit, Collins, uncle says so ; and early to-morrow morning you must take him round to the tailor's to see if it requires alteration."

Collins said that he had taken that liberty while his mistress had been busy upstairs, and that everything would be ready for Pierre by nine the next morning. " Sir," said the man, " I am certain that the Frenchman has been a sailor, and not only a sailor, but a gentleman's servant. He seems a very decent fellow, and the Admiral thinks the world of him."

Then Jack crept upstairs to meet his mother, for he had heard the door of his sister's old room (a dressing-room that communicated with his mother's) close. She was standing on the landing, and looked at her son with happy, smiling eyes.

" Mother, is she asleep ? The fairy—our Kitty—uncle's Kitty ! " whispered the lad. " May I see her ? Oh ! mother, let me see her ! "

Mrs. Woodruff opened the door, and mother and son stepped silently to the bedside. In a tent bedstead (used, in the days of which we write, for young people, to whom the mature glories of four-posters were looked forward to with other questionable promotions in their journey through life) " Kitty " lay sleeping. Such snowy frilled pillows ! Such lace-trimmed sheets ! Such dainty night-clothes on her travel-worn little body ! No wonder that she was dreaming of home, and the old life before she knew that sin, with want and sorrow, make existence very hard for the many.

" Mother ! Mother ! How lovely—how sweet ! "

"Hush! Hush!" said Mrs. Woodruff. "Listen!" And, together, with loving faces bent over the sleeping child, they heard her murmur: "Monsieur—Madame—votre Majesté—papa!" Then the sleeper turned with a sigh of profound happiness and sank into even sounder slumber.

Then Mrs. Woodruff led her boy from the room, and, tired with the excitement of the evening, they too retired, but not to sleep, for Mr. Midshipman Woodruff had a wound to be dressed; a wound that made him the envy of every boy in Folkestone from the age of eight to fourteen.

He had only returned with his uncle that morning, so his devoted mother had not as yet any experience in such a delicate task. Collins, who had received all necessary instructions from Dr. Slateman—the only doctor then in Folkestone—had prepared all that was required in Jack's room. The operation was about to begin when a knock was heard at the door. On it being opened Pierre stood before the party. He bowed with deference, and explained in broken English his proficiency in the dressing of gunshot wounds. On hearing this, Mrs. Woodruff at once asked him if he would assist Collins, who had but little or no experience, and so ably did Pierre bathe, cleanse, and dress Jack's wound, so carefully did he place the lint and re-bind it, that both Mrs. Woodruff and Collins felt grateful to the Frenchman. So all went to bed in the best of spirits, and the new-comers were with one consent voted "a perfect god-send."

"Bless me, it will change the place, cheer the mistress, fill the house with happiness as it used to be; and as for Miss Kitty's manservant, why he'll do his share, and the more in the servants' hall the better, and he is a sailor too, like the rest of us!" Collins, of course, included himself with the three gentlemen of the house.

So "the French Invasion," as it had been called by a witty member of Folkestone society, had already gained a victory at No. 4, Church Street, and the conquest of the town was but a matter of a few hours later—in fact, it capitulated before noon the next day. And was it

to be wondered at? For youth and beauty with innocence and bravery, will always conquer—and this is how it happened.

Breakfast was a little later than usual at No. 4. If the quality had overslept, was it to be wondered at? A mother had been given a motherless child to replace her own; a brother, a lost sister; and the little creature they both so warmly welcomed was so unusual in her childish grace. So it was not until nine that Jack was joined by his mother and Kitty in the dining-room. The latter was followed into the room by Pierre, dressed in irreproachable black livery, his hair powdered, and handsome silver buckles on his shoes. He carried over his arm a table napkin. As Kitty advanced to the table, she again made the graceful courtesy that had so surprised the servants on the previous evening. Pierre tied the napkin round her neck, and she was again seated by Mrs. Woodruff's right hand, Pierre standing at the back of her chair during breakfast.

If the child's manners are extraordinary, thought Jack, what about the man's? For, though a mere lad, Jack had seen more than his mother, and with his uncle had visited noblemen at their country seats; but they never had such an attendant as this sailor—"Why, he is a regular major domo!" thought he, little thinking that he had, in his own diction, "hit the nail on its right head," and that the devoted attendant on their little Kitty was indeed a major domo of one of the most sumptuous establishments in France.

The breakfast was even gayer than the supper had been. After it was finished, Jack, already a slave, and a slave for life too, hinted at a walk by the sea. This proposition met with the entire approbation of the enslaver, and Mrs. Woodruff having given consent, and a little hat with pink ribbons found to be the very thing for the occasion, they started on their walk, arm in arm—Mr. Midshipman Woodruff and his cousin Kitty, followed by the latter's manservant.

Windows, doors, garden gates, alleys, shops—no point of vantage from which the Folkestonians could safely, without detection, see the so-called Admiral's daughter,

was forgotten. For people were well-bred in those days, though, perhaps, more curious from having less to occupy them at a distance, and tried to veil their curiosity; and, although on that memorable occasion the more impulsive did find a morning walk an absolute necessity, yet the greater number stayed at home, and from behind muslin and wire blinds, eyes of every colour were bent on seeing all they could; and their curiosity was in most cases rewarded by such a vision—"a real sight as would cure sore eyes," as one old dame said with enthusiasm. "For Mr. Midshipman Woodruff was as handsome as brave, and in his uniform too, with one arm in a sling, and on the other such a child as never was seen before—so loving-like, the pair of them. He in his white breeches and blue coat, she in her white dress and pink ribbons. Oh! the pretty pair! Oh! the darlings!" And the rash old dame, who had often boxed the hero's father's ears, and the Admiral's also, for that matter, rushed from behind a door where she had been carefully hidden, crying "Master Jack! welcome to you and the 'Pride of Folkestone' too! She is worthy of the Admiral, the pretty lass!" And did not King George's brave officer shake hands with Dame Pilcher, and did not Miss Kitty do the same? "And what about the Frenchy as was behind, all glorious like? Why he bowed to me as if I, Sally Pilcher, was the queen herself, or the mayor's lady!"

Ah! on many a winter's evening did the worthy dame recount that first meeting—when Jack and Kitty took the town by storm.

CHAPTER X

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST

Love comforteth like Sunshine after Rain.—*Venus and Adonis.*

IN nearly every life there is one epoch during which almost perfect happiness has been attained; when sorrow, with its accessories of sin and personal pain, is unknown; when earthly bliss is a foreshadowing of that which is to be ours "some day"; when even nature joins us in a hymn of thankful rejoicing, and the elements seem in tune with the ecstasy of the human heart, which is for a time lifted out of all misgivings, all past griefs.

For one month Bessie Woodruff and her household tasted this ideal happiness. Not that the dead child was forgotten, for that could never be, but she seemed to her mother to share their joy, and the new love, that love that came to comfort, and that "comforted like sunshine after rain," seemed in an unexplained and altogether mysterious manner connected with her own child. Pious from her cradle, she accepted this great joy as she had done the sorrow, as sent from Heaven, and therefore to be rejoiced over and received with thankfulness; and she lost no time in vain scruples. She gave the first intimation of the joy that was hers while Jack and Kitty were taking their first walk, for after seeing them start, looking with a mother's pride at their retreating figures, she retired to her room. Half an hour later, when the cook came for orders, she noticed that her mistress was out of mourning.

The morning passed quickly, for there was much to do; there were many orders to be given and many visits to be paid to the re-established playroom. Mrs. Woodruff never ceased to remember those dreadful

words, " her mother was murdered on the 10th of last month " ; and as there was no mother who could ever claim her treasure, she would replace that mother. The toys that had been put aside by loving hands, lest they should recall the absence of their little owner, were asked for and replaced in the toy cupboard or on shelves.

The servants were as busy as their mistress, and the house so long silent was full of movement. Collins whistled gaily as he polished silver in his pantry ; and, looking out of her bedroom window, Mrs. Woodruff saw the gardener put up a swing, and then she heard Jack's voice and Kitty's laugh ; but before they reached the entrance door she was there to meet them.

She blushed almost like a girl when she heard her son say, " Mother, mother ! just as you used to be ! " And as he kissed her he whispered, " It's not that our Kitty is forgotten, but we must be good to uncle's."

Just as in old times, Martha took her little charge upstairs to dress her for dinner, which was taken at the rather inconvenient hour of 2 p.m., but one admirably chosen for digestive functions, as the viands in vogue in 1792 were of a most substantial nature, and the appetites were generally in keeping with the liberal supply of joints, pies and puddings provided to appease them. Yet, if the novelists of that period are to be relied upon, it was from that mysterious complaint, " vapours," that ladies then suffered, not from indigestion as at present. But this scourge of the twentieth century must be put down—as it generally is—to the " cup which cheers but does not inebriate," and tea was at the time of which we write a luxury, and a tea-party, the very mention of which provokes almost derision to-day, was then alluded to with bated breath as an entertainment at once distinguished and exclusive.

Mrs. Woodruff was giving a tea-party that evening. The guests had been invited a few days previously, and she thought with positive delight of the enjoyment the entertainment would now give her. Collins, all-important, had been sent during the morning with several other notes of invitation.

" It will be a little reception for Jack," was what she

wrote ; what she did not write was, " that I may introduce you to the child who has come to comfort me." So while the inmates of No. 4 were dining with appetites " like to young sea-lions," society at Folkestone was in a fever of anticipation, for in a few short hours it would know all, and have heard Mrs. Woodruff's version of the unforeseen arrival of her niece. Moreover, in many a gentle breast there beat a wounded heart, for it must be remembered that the Admiral had always been considered a bachelor, and the prospect of sharing his glory and his heart had been alluring to the unmarried ladies, young or middle-aged, of the town. Not that the hopes of the latter were ever seriously entertained by the gentle spinsters themselves, but the memory of past days was very dear to them as they recalled festive scenes when the then handsome young lieutenant had pressed their hands, and—let us blush for the inconstancy of the hero !—sometimes saluted their fair cheeks. But sailors will be sailors, and they wished him well. They had, one and all, a mutual congratulation too, that " if he did not choose me, neither did he any one else in the place." So no harm was done, and no hearts broken; but they were curious, oh, so very curious, and so was every one else.

Collins, too, had excited another sentiment in the town, for that excellent servant and ci-devant sailor was " putting it on." The raps which he gave at the various residences were almost alarming in their professional style, and the bows with which he delivered his notes were almost equal to those given by Pierre to Dame Pilcher ; and when he received the answers (generally given by lady members of the establishments) he backed with so much dexterity, and bowed with such grace, that it was difficult for the astonished Folkestonians to make up their minds if they should laugh or try and appear " to the manner born." But all honour to the fair ladies, for they realized that Collins was actuated by lofty and patriotic motives, and they were proud of him, and in their own peculiar English said, " Ain't going to be out-done by a Monsieur ! We will all trim up ! "

And they did "trim up," and by half-past five the knocker at No. 4 gave its first intimation of the arrival of a guest. It was, I regret to record, but a feeble effort, and no one felt its insignificance as regards style more than the spinster lady who gave it—"a regular old gal," as Collins informed Pierre. The door was thrown wide open by that worthy, and she was further intimidated by the sight of Pierre, who, advancing, took from off her shoulders the light wrap with which they were covered. This done, he took three steps backward and bowed, while Collins threw open the drawing-room door and announced loudly "Miss Grainger!" As that lady said afterwards, "It was almost too much for me."

Mrs. Woodruff, looking all animation, received the timid lady with evident pleasure, for she had been one of her mother's friends, and in the excitement of the last few hours she had never taken into consideration how to reply to possible interrogations as to the name or relationship of her little visitor; but as she looked at the kind face of this dear timid friend of her youth, she felt inspired to tell her the exact truth, and get her to aid her with the explanations that might be necessary.

So, after the usual salutations, Mrs. Woodruff turned, and taking a letter from a letter-rack said, "Read this, dear. I feel sure that George would like me to ask your advice."

Oh, timely flattery! Even the guileless can both give and guilelessly receive you! For the speaker knew that in her youth her lady guest had been one of George's flames, and one whose gentle friendship was really much prized by that inconstant lover.

Miss Grainger read the letter, and became at once (as was the fashion in those days) emotional, and gasped—"Her mother murdered on the 10th of last month! Poor darling! You must take that mother's place; we must all try and make her happy. She will be a sister to Jack. The poor Admiral! What must his feelings be! Oh, Bessie dear, but you must take this as a blessing—I see you do. And the poor child knows nothing?"

"Nothing," said Mrs. Woodruff, "and I can do nothing

until George returns. But, dear Judith" (Miss Grainger's name was Judith), "you will, as our mutual friend" —how many a diplomatist is born to blush unseen, and waste his or her talents on the desert air—"aid me by informing any one who may wish to know who my darling may be."

She had hardly finished, when a series of raps proclaimed the arrival of the rest of the guests. One after another they were announced and entered boldly, not only in full dress, but with their most distinguished manners. Pierre, who assisted, as we know, in the hall, was as much overcome with their provincial costumes as the wearers of the costumes were with his manners; but the man recognized that it was by such as these that England held the position she did among the nations.

After a few moments' conversation, Collins opened a door that led into the dining-room and announced that tea was served. The company then followed Mrs. Woodruff to the tea-table, which was beautifully arranged. The china with which the various trays were set out would now be treasured in cabinets. The tea-cups were all handleless, and the coffee mugs without saucers. The ham sandwiches were in piles, so were the cakes—all home-made. Both green and black tea, with coffee, were being handed round by Collins and a parlour-maid.

Though pleasantly occupied, the company looked expectant, and many wondered "if Bessie Woodruff meant, after all, not to let the child be seen." But their anxiety was not of long duration, for the door leading into the hall soon opened, and Pierre announced, "Mademoiselle et Monseigneur." He bit his lips after that one mistake, but Monsiegneur Jack was so delighted at what he thought to be a tribute to his uniform that his hearty burst of laughter put Pierre at his ease, and but few even noticed the exalted title given to their young host.

Jack introduced his little companion at once as "his cousin Kitty," and, after taking her round in order that she should make the individual acquaintance of each guest, seated her by his mother's side. In the interval Miss Grainger had not been silent, and the contents of

the Admiral's letter had been pretty generally communicated to the company, so the looks given to the unconscious child were not only those of admiration, but of sympathetic regard for the terrible tragedy that had brought her among them. The general unspoken verdict was that nothing had been exaggerated. One lady, a reader of romances, and whose cousin knew a maid of honour, said "that she for one believed the child to be a little court lady, for her manners were only those of a court."

So with Pierre behind her chair, and Miss Grainger by her side, and Jack looking in her direction as often as possible, Kitty was very happy, and did then and there give her heart to the fair Judith, "as that rogue, George Woodruff, should have done years ago, the rascal!" This was the mental soliloquy of the then Vicar of Folkestone, who knew his lady parishioner's worth, and who could not account, poor dear man, for the unexpected.

After tea, quadrille tables were arranged in the drawing-room, and the spinet opened and simple songs sung, intermingled with war-like ditties, terminating as a rule with terrific shakes—all did their best.

About eight, Collins brought into the drawing-room on a silver tray a large china bowl, which contained a syllabub; he deposited it on a side-table. Pierre, who had followed him with a tray, on which were small tumblers, waited while Collins filled them, by means of an elegant punch ladle, with that celebrated decoction of the eighteenth century, the creamy curds floating on the liquid pink making it as pretty to look at as it was delicious to taste. Coyly the ladies took a glass, though hinting at their inability to indulge in such a heady beverage; and it must be admitted that the fair dames were right, for it required a strong head not to be affected by its insidious influence. Again, moderns must deplore deterioration in other organs as well as those of digestion.

It was, on the whole, a most festive scene, and after this propitiation to Bacchus the songs may have been given with more verve, and recitations with greater aplomb. "The Dandy's Rout," recited by an old lady, made the audience enthusiastic.

Jack was then asked by his friends to dance the hornpipe. He complied with pleasure, and regretted that, owing to his wounded arm, he could not do justice to this wonderful dance, then, as now, so dearly loved by sailors, and only danced by them. And so did he astonish Kitty by his various steps and shuffles, so unexpected were the capers that he cut, so different was this English dance to the stately measures in vogue at Versailles or the Tuileries, so ably did both Jack dance and Collins play, that the astonished Kitty felt it incumbent on her part to try, not to emulate the already adored Jack, but to do something that would show him that she, too, could dance. So after the applause with which Jack's terpsichorean feats were hailed had abated, Pierre, who had received a hint from his mistress, borrowed the "kit" from Collins, and after tuning it carefully in the hall, returned and played a species of minuet, arranged for one dancer only. And then, indeed, did the enjoyment of the evening culminate in admiring wonder, for it would be impossible to depict in language the elegant grace of the little dancer, trained to dance before the most polished court of Europe, and even there considered the personification of the beauty of movement. The lovely little creature did her best, and after perfectly enthusiastic encouragement, to which she responded by profound curtesies, she danced a fan dance that had been specially composed for her.

So entirely were the spectators engrossed by this unexpected spectacle that they did not notice that another guest had joined them.

Captain John Woodruff had been given a month's furlough while his ship was undergoing repairs, and in order to spend as long a time as possible at his home, had hastened there without any previous intimation to his wife. He left his post-chaise at the *Rose*, the principal inn then at Folkestone, and walked to the Churchyard to visit his little daughter's grave, for the grief caused by her death was still very poignant, and he almost dreaded entering the house now so changed. As he stood by his child's grave bare-headed he looked in the direction of No. 4, and to his surprise saw that it

was brilliantly illuminated, for all the windows were lighted. Naturally surprised, but at the same time relieved, he turned his steps in the direction of his house, and quietly opening the front door, stood bewildered in the hall.

The chairs and oriental lounges were all covered with wraps. The sound of a fiddle, and that not played by Collins, could be heard in the drawing-room. He opened the door of the smoking-room; a card-table stood ready, and a spirit stand was on a table near. On a tray beside it were half-a-dozen long clay pipes with carefully waxed ends—all was ready for whist, but no players.

"Every one has gone mad!" was the Captain's first reflection. He closed the door, and, crossing the hall, went into the butler's pantry. It was in great confusion too—teacups, cakes of every description, dirty glasses and trays full of clean ones, a china bowl with the remains of a syllabub in it, a larger one full. He was not vexed, far from it, but to think of Bessie giving a party! This thought was hardly formulated when the door leading into the servants' apartments opened, and very quietly a girl—the kitchen-maid—crept in. She put out her hand to take a queen cake; as she did so she looked up, and ejaculated, "Master!"

"Take your cake, Betty," said Captain Woodruff. "What is it all about—the party?"

"It's a party, sir, as mistress is giving for Master Jack and Miss Kitty."

"You are mad!" roared the Captain, for the sound of applause reached the pantry. "You are all mad! Tell me at once what you mean!"

The girl looked frightened, but said, "It's true, sir, for she came last night."

"Who came? Betty, answer me clearly, who came last night?"

Poor Betty trembled, as she said afterwards, "like to die." But she was a Briton, and no slave, so she showed pluck and answered firmly, "Miss Woodruff came, sir; Miss Kitty, the Admiral's Miss Kitty."

Another burst of applause was distinctly heard.

"Mad, why you are one and all of you mad!" said the Captain, and he marched off in quarter-deck style to the drawing-room.

It was crowded. Collins was standing by a manservant dressed in the same livery as that worn by his brother's servant. His eyes were fixed on something evidently in the middle of the room. The manservant in black was playing the violin. The Captain was tall, so he was able to see over the heads of those near him. His wife, his Bessie, dressed in pink, flushed and happy as he loved to see her, stood near him; Jack, with his arm in a sling, beside her—his boy wounded too. But no one noticed him; he felt a stranger in his own house. And then he too looked, for his eyes, occupied previously by wife and son, at last looked beyond them.

A child was dancing—a child dressed in his own child's dress, and dancing as he never thought it possible for a child to dance; a stately miniature queen, an interloper in his home, and who had caused his own Kitty, his "mad-cap," to be forgotten, and he winced with pain. He continued watching; the child's face was gravely sweet, and all at once he saw her look in his direction and recognition flash in her eyes, for she threw down a fan that she was holding and rushed towards him.

His wife then turned and saw him, and, regardless of any one or anything, threw herself into his arms, saying, "The only thing that was wanted to complete my joy! Oh, John, how happy you have made me!"

Jack was beside him, too, hanging on his arm. "Father, it's too good to see you! Oh, father, we have wanted you! Look, father, at uncle's Kitty!" And then they all three became aware that the child was crying in Pierre's arms.

"She must have mistaken you for George, John," said Mrs. Woodruff, "she is so lonely!"

But if Captain Woodruff was renowned as a stiff disciplinarian he was not equal to ignoring beauty in distress, so he went to Pierre and welcomed the little girl so kindly that the tears were dried by magic. And, surrounded by the friends of his youth, with his devoted wife by his side, with Kitty on his knee, and his son

before him, the gallant Captain sent for the syllabub, and an even more heady beverage, for he was heard to order "rum-punch, Collins! and don't forget the rum!"

There was no doubt of one thing, it was a party! And though many a fair one took on that occasion double what she had ever thought prudent to indulge in before, society in Folkestone did not suffer from headache the following day. The Captain sang song after song; he sandwiched two with one of Kitty's. No one played whist, for how could even the most inveterate card player leave such a gathering? And did not the Captain invite them, one and all, to a party to be given the next week to welcome him home! as the one they were now honouring was to welcome his beloved niece, Kitty.

But Kitty did not hear this, for she was sleeping on the speaker's brave heart—a heart that meant originally to refuse her admission, but in which she was to reign for ever as its undisputed queen.

And then followed that Elysian month during which all were perfectly happy. The Captain, who had learnt all that his wife could tell him, and being, with no knowledge of French, unable to interrogate Pierre, had to accept matters as they were, though he felt sure that they had misinterpreted his brother's letter, and that Mr. Granville would have done well to remember that though "speech is silver, silence is golden." However, as he said to his wife, "George will put us all right, and we can have a good laugh about it. One thing we know to be correct is that the child is motherless, and she must be the daughter of some French nobleman, and doubtless, poor child, is sent to England for safety. But then," he said, "I can't make it out."

So Kitty was accepted, and daily strengthened her hold on the affections of those with whom she was surrounded, and she, too, was perfectly happy. Any day her mother might join her with her friend the Admiral, for Pierre was expecting the latter any moment. And then Jack was such a delightful companion, nicer than any one she had ever seen before; for the Dauphin, her future king and little playmate, was a gentle, reticent

child, and Madame, his sister, too, was far from gay. The etiquette that hemmed in those royal children was depressing, and Gabrielle de Verminoux (Kitty) had been with them but not of them. Lulu, her brother, was a grown man, almost as grand a personage as her father; but Jack was Jack, ready to do anything, who seemed as pleased with her as she with him, and though she could not understand what he said, she could guess a great deal. And Pierre liked Jack, and said he was "un brave," and that he knew her mother would be happy did she know, which she would do "some day." How good and kind he was!

The weather, too, was most unusual; calm sunshiny days succeeded one another, a peaceful fading away of summer. The sky was cloudless, and the wind, generally boisterous by the sea, was complaisant, and did not toss rebellious curls in their owner's face. Those were the days for excursions, and the little lovers, accompanied by Pierre, and sometimes by the Captain, would wander far from home; for a Shetland pony had again resumed its place in the family, having left the peaceful Broadmead meadows for its stall in the stable at Church Street. And Jack—oh, happy Jack! Mrs. Woodruff's bliss was almost perfect, with her husband and son by her side, and this new love! And the Captain was grateful to the child for having made his wife happy; and, as he sat by his fireside, smoking a long clay pipe, he would often turn to his friend the Vicar, and quote Shakespeare's beautiful lines—"Love comforteth like sunshine after rain," and then would add, "And you know as well as I do how we wanted comforting."

CHAPTER XI

PIERRE

Faithful friends are hard to find.
—Passionate Pilgrim.

AS each day passed, and did not bring with it the Admiral, Pierre became more anxious, and began to doubt his wisdom in not announcing the name and rank of his little charge. He was, in a sense, too bewildered by the readiness with which all had accepted the very hasty conclusion arrived at, and publicly given out by Mr. Granville. At first it had seemed a matter of comparatively little consequence—in fact, an unexpected stroke of good fortune; but, as time went on, and he saw the place that the child was taking in the family that had so kindly welcomed them both, he deplored his want of candour. It was his constant thought, what would Mrs. Woodruff think when she knew that the Kitty she loved so fondly as a niece and adopted daughter was in no way related to her? Or the Captain—how would such an irascible disciplinarian tolerate such a breach of confidence? And Mr. Jack—Pierre smiled when he thought of what he would think; for he felt sure that he would be protected and understood by one member of the family at least. His little charge, too, might suffer by his folly, for the atmosphere of 4, Church Street, was so upright, honest, and true, that he dreaded its inmates thinking in the future that his master's daughter—"his master who was the soul of honour"—had been deceitful. For they might not believe what was really quite true, that she did not

understand the relationship she was supposed to have to her friend the Admiral.

These reflections were mixed with others of a very different nature, and the very idea of his beloved mistress' daughter being so degraded, "by mistake even," and considered the child of a marriage unacknowledged by the Admiral, made him wild at his own folly! What right had he to expose his little charge, even for a short time, to such insinuations as were doubtless indulged in by many? And what added fuel to the fire of his remorse was that he was thoroughly conscious of the superiority of the kind people with whom he was living as an honoured and respected servant and friend; for it was understood by one and all in the house and out of it, "that the Admiral thought the world of him, as a brave and trustworthy man." Even that brave and valiant sailor had been compromised by his reticence, for more than a month had passed since their arrival at Folkestone, and by his tacit acceptance of a really foolish mistake.

As he turned again and again in the comfortable bed given him by his little mistress' kind protectors, he became more and more distressed at the labyrinth of difficulties with which his want of directness had surrounded him. He felt sure that had the Admiral been less occupied by professional duties, and not so overcome by the news of the tragic deaths of his friends the Duc and Duchesse, he would at once have introduced their little daughter to Mr. Granville as Mademoiselle de Verminoux. Or, in default of his so doing, why had he, Pierre, not contradicted Mr. Granville? Even at Deal Castle he had every opportunity, for the Warden, Lord X., spoke French. There was no excuse. He dreaded the Admiral's return.

Pierre, with these tormenting reflections, forgot a few extenuating circumstances—his very limited knowledge of English, and his conviction that the Admiral would return within a few days to Folkestone and immediately put matters on their right footing; his dread that until he had done so his defenceless charge might have a cold welcome. But Pierre did not remem-

ber anything that could, or would, mitigate his folly in the eyes of others. He had done wrong, and he was man enough to know that the only way to expiate wrong is to make a clean breast of it, and he made up his mind to take the Captain into his confidence that very day—All Saints' Day. His mistress seemed to stand by his bedside and hold out her hands as though entreating him to do something. "Yes, he would have no more of this folly. His master's daughter should be called by her rightful name before nightfall. All Saints' Day! He would get up and look out of the window on to the quiet Churchyard where so many slumbered peacefully."

Pierre was a Catholic, and the festival was a very sacred one to him. He longed piteously for the past; he was homesick for those who knew him as a boy; he was weary of the present, realizing the happiness that had been his and that could never return. Every event of his past life was re-passed with a clearness of perception that he had not deemed possible. Trifling incidents, forgotten for years, became as vivid as when enacted. He closed his eyes, and could see his Sunday suit laid out for him by his mother, to be worn on a festival of *Toussaint* fifty years ago! Yes, fifty years ago! He was an old man now, over sixty, and of late he had felt far from well. He got out of bed, and putting up the blind, looked out. It was dawning, and the Church tower stood out a darker grey than its background of sky; the tombstones and the grass around them were powdered with glistening white frost; there was no wind. As he looked, his present loneliness seemed terrible when contrasted with the joyous surroundings of his youth, and then he stumbled and fell to the floor.

How long Pierre remained unconscious he never knew, but when he did regain possession of his senses he returned to his bed, and remained in a doze until Collins came into his room to see what was the matter.

Awakened by his entrance, Pierre looked round him with such a dazed expression that Collins not only insisted on his remaining in bed, where he would give

him every attention, but, on passing the Captain's dressing-room rapped, and on being admitted asked for advice.

Shortly after both went to Pierre's room, but found that the invalid had already risen. He thanked the Captain for his attention, and his manner was such that the latter took his hand and said, " I am Captain now, Pierre, and you are on an English craft, so under my orders ! Collins, fetch the doctor." And then he was surprised to see a tear roll down the Frenchman's cheek.

Poor Captain ! He little thought what remorse his kindness kindled in Pierre's heart. Dr. Slateman returned with Collins and, after the necessary inquiries, recommended quiet, and remaining in the house for a day or two ; gave directions as to diet and to medicine, which would be forthcoming later, and then went, saying cheerfully, " In a day or two we shall have you off the sick list, and Collins can take your place as attendant on our Princess ; he's been practising on the quiet, ha, ha ! " and then they all went downstairs laughing.

Pierre followed shortly, and, seated in the pantry, heard his beloved little mistress's voice as she passed through the hall. She asked for him at once, and the sick man heard Collins answering as best he could in broken French with many " nongs, nongs." Then the door came open gently, and the only thing that remained to him of the old life looked in upon him. He brightened up, and told her that his illness was nothing ; that for a day or two perhaps he would not be able to attend upon her, but that " le bon Collins " would so enjoy taking his place. The same look came into the child's face as she looked at her old friend that he had noticed for the first time when they were on board the *Saucy Mary*. Then she was doubting if she would indeed rejoin her mother ; now it was a presentiment, an indefinite fear, for Gabrielle (Kitty) knew nothing of death. She had been too young to remember the death of the Dauphin, the elder son of their Majesties, and no grown people during her short life had been

taken from their accustomed places, never to return. She seemed reassured when Collins brought in a bottle of medicine and a small packet, and Pierre told her that he had only to drink what Dr. Slateman sent him, and remain quiet. He immediately took a dose and seemed better. Collins then escorted Miss Woodruff to the dining-room, and Pierre again winced.

After breakfast preparations were made for the usual excursion, and the invalid was able to stand at the entrance and see the party start—for once going without him. But he was grateful to think that Collins could take his place, for his legs seemed hardly able to support him even for that short time at the door. He returned to the pantry, sat down near the fire, and again dozed. He was awakened by a rapping at the front door. Use being second nature, he got up and answered it, and was surprised to see Mr. Granville. He bowed in his grand manner and asked that gentleman's pleasure.

To see the Captain at once, said the visitor, and if possible by himself.

Why did something like an icy arrow go through Pierre's heart? He put his hand in its direction and steadied himself, saying in French, "Not bad news of the Admiral, I hope, sir?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Granville, "the worst."

But before Pierre could ask for further information, Captain Woodruff, returning from a walk on the cliffs, joined his visitor on the doorstep and took him at once to the smoking-room. Mr. Granville looked behind him as he followed, shook his head, and again requested Pierre to notify to the other members of the household that his visit was of a private nature. "We will send for you shortly," he remarked.

When a man has lived sixty-four years, and for a portion (a large portion in Pierre's case) of that life has been in constant touch with death, the unexpected is the expected, for however elevated may be the rank of a soldier or sailor the fatal bullet may at last bring him down, veteran or recruit, admiral or midshipman. Pierre knew the purport of Mr. Granville's communication as well as though he had been listening in that

smoking-room where he expected shortly to join the two gentlemen, and be told all, as the trusted attendant of the supposed daughter of the dead man.

He shivered with cold, and again mechanically looked out of the window. The sun was shining, and the grey Church tower stood out from a bright blue background. The dead were very quiet where they lay; the brave Admiral was of them now, though his body was doubtless in that sea which he had so triumphantly sailed over, and guarded like a faithful watchdog for his country and his King. He, Pierre, was going to make a clean breast of it to the Captain. He could even explain to Mr. Granville how he had been the original cause of the mistake; but with even this loophole, namely the presence of the man who had caused this folly of his, he longed for the kindly Admiral who knew it all. The fame and standing of his master, the Duc, would, he knew, give his daughter respect and attention, but with the Admiral's family she had been given love, a home, and a dead child's vacant place. The sun was shining on him now so brightly that it made him feel sick. He turned, but as he turned, he fell, and then he never moved again.

He had not long fallen when there was a sound of pony's hoofs and voices, but not as gay or voluble as usual—for the young people were returning. "Ill news travels apace," and a rumour of the arrival of a special messenger to the Captain had reached Jack's ears, so he, eager to know what the news might be, at once suggested to Collins that they should return and put their minds at ease.

Collins lifted Kitty from the saddle, and led the pony down the street to the side lane which led to the back entrance and stables, and when he reached the stable belonging to No. 4, he found the groom out; so he took off the pony's bridle and saddle, and then stood for ten minutes or so talking to a friend, and consequently did not return to the house for quite half an hour.

In the meantime Jack, seeing Kitty go into the pantry, and knowing that Pierre was there, turned in the

opposite direction and walked straight into the smoking-room. His father was sitting by the centre table with his head bent; a gentleman, a stranger, was standing with his back to the fire. Captain Woodruff looked up with an ejaculation of displeasure, which he repressed at once on seeing the intruder, and called him to his side, saying, "Jack, I am thankful that you are here. You can guess what news Mr. Granville," pointing to the gentleman on the hearthrug, "has brought us? Your brave uncle, my good brother, is gone! A trivial accident has deprived the nation of one that could ill be spared now. My only son, Granville, the last of the Woodruffs!" Here Mr. Granville expostulated. "Yes," said the Captain again, "he is, I know, the last of the Woodruffs. Poor George, poor George! Jack, where have you left her? The poor darling, George's child!"

"She is all right, father, with Pierre," answered his son. "Don't let them know anything yet. Wait, sir, till you get a little calmer."

"She will be more precious to me now than ever. If not his child, which I sometimes doubt, she was, he said it himself in his letter, 'very dear to him.'"

The poor Captain, uttering these disjointed words, walked up and down the room.

"You know more than we do, Granville; do you believe that child to be my brother's?"

"I have no reason to doubt it," said the man addressed. "The manservant who had charge of her never contradicted me, nor did he, Lord X——, who speaks French like a Frenchman, and he had no excuse for not doing so had the child been the daughter of some nobleman, or belonging, as her manner indicated, to the French Court. Lord X——swears that she must be a princess."

"Whoever she may be that is nothing to me," said the Captain. "She is accepted here as my brother's child, and she will take her place among us now as his representative. But had you known my brother better you would have wondered as I have done and do. He was the best of men, and to have contracted a secret marriage without at least one confidant is more than

I can understand. I will send for Pierre, who must know more than any of us, and if I have any knowledge or judgment of men a worthier fellow does not exist. Doubtless he was told to be reticent, and now will do his best to make all clear. We will break this dreadful news to him at once, poor fellow! And the child's mother murdered not two months ago! Jack, go, my boy, and ask Pierre to come and see me. It will do me good, I assure you! it will be better for me!"

But at this moment hasty steps were heard crossing the hall and the smoking-room door was thrown open, and Collins, looking distorted with horror and surprise, stood before its startled occupants.

"Oh, Master! Sir! Captain! Mr. Jack! Come all of you for Heaven's sake, for they are both dead!" and Collins put his hands to his head in a perfect frenzy.

Hardly a moment passed before they were all three with Collins in the pantry. By the window, just as he had fallen, lay Pierre with a peaceful smile upon his face, quite dead. And by him, but nearer the table, with blood streaming from a wound on her forehead, lay the child; but on her changed face there was no peace, only inexpressible woe and despair.

The Captain was the captain in an instant. "Collins, go for the Doctor at once! Jack, go for Martha—not a word to your mother; we shall know the worst before long!"

As he said this he lifted the insensible child from the floor and laid her on the table. Mr. Granville in the meantime was kneeling by Pierre, and after feeling his pulse, unbuttoned his coat, and, putting his hand on his heart, listened intently. He got up reluctantly and shook his head. "Quite dead, Woodruff! Quite dead, poor fellow!"

Soon Collins was back with the Doctor, who gave one look at Pierre and then directed all his attention to the little sufferer. "Concussion of the brain, brought on doubtless by a fall on the corner of the table. Yes, I see," pointing to a blood stain, "there! Must have come in and found Pierre lying as we see him, and tripped. Perfectly insensible, and will be doubtless for

days, Woodruff! Keep her quite flat, and carry her upstairs as she is; the table was fortunately a light one. Perfect quiet is necessary." Turning to Mr. Granville, "Sir, may I ask you to join Mrs. Woodruff on her return from her walk, and prepare her for this sad news, which she must be told sooner or later?"

And again round Kitty Woodruff's bed did loving hearts beat with mingled hopes and fears—the same faces, sorrowful now as then, bent over a prostrate form that lay with wide open eyes that saw nothing, but seemed to look into an abyss of unutterable woe. There was very little hope, Dr. Slateman had told the Captain from the first.

Mrs. Woodruff moved about as in a dream; every action was mechanical; she seemed a woman turned to stone. Only once did she speak of any other subject but the one which engrossed her every thought, and that was in connexion with the arrangements for Pierre's funeral. She left the sick-room in charge of Miss Grainger and Martha and went to her husband's room.

"John," she said. "I wish Pierre, dear good Pierre," here she burst into tears, "buried by the side of our Kitty. He has my child now, and I have his. You understand, John, I have his!" And the poor woman looked so wild that her husband entreated her to be calm, and promised that all should be as she wished.

For four days did the struggle for life continue, and during those dreadful days no member of the Woodruff family took off his or her clothes. Jack, worn out with anxiety and watching, would now and again sleep an hour or two, anywhere. Dr. Slateman was in and out continually, and, it was easily seen, became more anxious as each day passed. But the house was not to be made desolate. The angel of death that overshadowed it was called to other homes of sickness. For hope was very faint, and even the stout-hearted Captain almost in despair, when, as Jack (who had crept into the sick-room for perhaps the hundredth time that day to look at his beloved fairy, his princess) bent over the stiff changed little face, the eyes that had so long looked unconsciously into space contracted for a moment, then

saw him and smiled ; and he heard her whisper, " Jack ! " Dr. Slateman beckoned him away, and shortly after the even breathing of the patient told the listeners that a change for the better had come at last.

Then indeed did Miss Grainger show to advantage her many valuable qualities, for she gently insisted that Mrs. Woodruff should take rest, bringing forward so many arguments as to the advisability of her so doing that she was successful, and the poor woman retired to her room and slept for hours. When she returned to her post she found all cheerful, and Dr. Slateman very hopeful.

On leaving the sick-room he took the Captain aside and said, " Woodruff, I may save her life, but I cannot be certain that she will ever be quite the same. There may be a total loss of memory, or indeed she may never entirely regain her senses. There is one good sign, however, she recognized Jack."

" So long as we can keep her I ask no more for the present ; time may bring back all her faculties. Poor child, I feel that she will live, and for a time a loss of memory might spare her much sorrow. Poor George ! " and the Captain wrung the Doctor's hand. " Poor Pierre ! The funeral is at two, this afternoon."

" I know," replied the Doctor ; " I shall join you here. Of course you know there is to be quite a gathering. The poor fellow was a sailor, and I think many will attend as a mark of respect to the Admiral. Collins is dreadfully cut up ! "

And the Doctor was right. By one, a number of sailors stood before the Guildhall (which was, and is, quite near Church Street) and, shortly before two, they marched four abreast to No. 4, where the twelve foremost were admitted. There was no other sign that a funeral was about to take place, the tolling of the bell having been forbidden on account of the proximity of the little invalid. Though a Catholic, Pierre was to be buried in a Protestant Churchyard, and with the ritual of the English Church. There were no members of his faith in Folkestone, consequently no priest or place of worship.

So the welcome these honest townsfolk had given him, living, was to be accorded him for ever, and all that could were present at the refugee's funeral. Though only a month had elapsed since Pierre came among them, his courteous manners and ready acceptance of their proffered friendship had made these men and women forget in the individual man the antagonism that existed between their respective nations. He had fought against these very men in many a hard-fought engagement on the sea—that sea whose deep voice could be plainly heard as it surged upon the beach below the cliffs in even, monotonous beats, for there was a ground swell on, and the sea, though calm, was noisy. And it was to this dirge that his old foes, men of the rival navy, headed by one of its bravest commanders, carried on their shoulders to its last resting-place the coffin, covered with the flag against which the dead man had so often striven.

It was these old foes, now friends, who, after the service in the crowded Church—where nearly every one present wore some sign of mourning—lowered Pierre Bellais to rest in the vault by the side of the daughter of his English host and friend. And Jack, who stood by his father's side, looking down, read over and over again the inscription on his little sister's coffin :—"Catherine Woodruff, aged 7 years. Died June the 21st, 1791." And then he read the inscription on Pierre's :—"Pierre, a Frenchman in the service of Admiral George Woodruff. Died November 1st, 1792. Faithful unto death."

During the ceremony, if any one had been looking from the cliffs, he would have seen a boat with furled sails. It was the *Saucy Mary* waiting for a favourable wind to take her back to Havre. "Flags flying half-mast on the Church tower, mates," said one of the crew—our old friend Bill. "They said as how she was terrible bad yesterday when I went over to Folkestone, now I suppose she has gone. Well, she was as pretty a lass as ever I put eyes on! The Admiral has got the lot with him now! They are cut up though, I warrant, for they was regular proud of her; those Folkestone

coves, called her 'The Pride of Folkestone'! I wonder what our old skipper would say if he knew? We must get the news passed on by the next ship if we can."

But Bill had no need to trouble himself about Rafferty, for he had already been informed of the events of the week, the last he was to spend in England for eight years, and though he had not heard that Kitty was dead, he had heard with dismay that there was little hope of her recovery. Then he, too, sailed away, carrying with him the secret with which he shortly was to be the only one acquainted.

On the arrival of the *Saucy Mary* at Havre, a woman, who had been watching from the end of the quay, advanced timidly and asked for Captain Rafferty. "Been took," answered Bill, in as good French as he could muster.

"And my brother-in-law and his little grandchild? What of them?" cried the woman.

"None of your gammon here," said Bill, as he winked at his mates. "We know all about them now, and who they were too." And, seeing the woman look surprised, but pleased, he added, "ain't got no good news though, for they are both dead."

The woman did not wait to answer or make further inquiries, for she hurried away. Bill, looking after her, said, "Another of 'em! Why, they knew how to make friends, and no wonder, for they was out of the common."

And all traces of the fugitives were lost at Havre, as death again intervened and made discovery impossible; for a month later Captain Leblanc paid with his life the penalty of protecting a few miserable nuns, and what became of his good wife Annette, it is hard to say—let us hope that she regained her native village in safety.

But her handiwork was to be treasured, though the kind hands were never to be taken and pressed in recognition of their charitable and loving skill, for Mrs. Woodruff had carefully folded the little garments and placed them in the same drawer (a drawer in her own bedroom) in which was kept another little dress, that even the new Kitty would never be allowed to wear, for it was the last worn by the dead child. As Madame

Annette was turning away with tear-dimmed eyes, Mrs. Woodruff, looking happy and cheerful, was standing by that open drawer. Jack joined her with a white paper packet in his hand that he seemed very reluctant to part with, but his mother looked so pleadingly at him that he smiled when she said, " I shall only take care of them, my dear, for you. They are so precious, but surely as much so to me as to you ? " And then she took the packet from her boy's hand and opened it. It contained a mass of golden curls.

" They will grow again, mother," said Jack, taking a tiny silken curl in his hand. " I can already see little ones as on a baby's head. Did you not notice them this morning ? "

" Yes," said Mrs. Woodruff, " they are growing, and just the same colour too ! I am so glad, for I wanted our Kitty to remain just as she was when she was sent to us, not with brown hair like mine."

" Yours is just as beautiful, mother." And then his mother kissed him, and they repacked the curls and put them on the top of the little bundle of garments, the gift of Madame Annette.

For Kitty was out of danger, though as yet she had only recognized Jack and—to that worthy's great delight—Collins, who, on tip-toe was taking a scuttle of coals into the bedroom, when to the surprise of all present the little invalid, who had been apparently dozing, called " Collins ! " and gave him her hand. The poor fellow nearly shed tears of joy, and later on brewed himself some rum-punch, which, after he had partaken of it, emboldened him to such an extent that he gave his master notice. And when the Captain indignantly asked his reason—" if caused by madness or rum-punch, you rascal "—explained that it was his present position in the family that he wished to change, as he was applying for the situation of Miss Woodruff's attendant, " as he knowed as the Admiral would have trusted her anywhere with him."

His request was at once acceded to, and Sinclair, the Admiral's servant, returning with his late master's luggage, was kept on in the family in Collins' place,

while the latter did his best to fill that vacant by the death of Pierre. And so ably did he fulfil his duties, so quick was he in anticipating little wants, and so ready in preparing little surprises, that Kitty's complete recovery was greatly owing to this humble friend.

CHAPTER XII

THE CAPTAIN MAKES ARRANGEMENTS

Good fortune guides thee!
—*Richard III*, iv. 1.

WITH Kitty on the high road to recovery, and the mystery of her birth likely to remain unsolved for ever, Captain Woodruff felt that before rejoining his ship he must make all settlements and arrangements necessary for her future welfare. As the Admiral had left no will, his brother, as next-of-kin, inherited his fortune, which was considerable, for not only had he shared equally in the division of the family property, but in those glorious days for sailors when prize money made many a successful captain rich, the Admiral had been very fortunate, and the expression of "as lucky as Woodruff" had become proverbial in the navy.

From the first, Captain Woodruff had resolved to hand over everything to his brother's supposed daughter, and the thought that she would be a rich woman comforted him as he sat one afternoon late in November in his smoking-room, surrounded with papers and boxes of every description. Mr. Grey, his lawyer, sat beside him.

The interview, which was a final one, had been lengthy. They had been engaged at this sad business for more than a fortnight, and had investigated everything that they hoped might in some unexpected manner enlighten them, but nothing had been discovered. Not a hint in any of the letters that they had read over—private letters that made the Captain proud to claim the Admiral as his brother, so full were many of them of thankful

recognition of some service rendered to the writer. The brave man's diary, too, had been looked over, but no mention was found in it of wife or child, nor even foreign friends.

The poor Captain at last in despair pushed back his chair and said, " Well, Grey, we are no nearer solution than we were when we started. Not that I mind. I don't want a penny of poor George's money, and I do want the child. What does it matter to me who she is ? Or who her mother was ? But judging from her manners, and poor Pierre's, she might easily be a princess ! However, she is my child now that I adopt her, and we will settle upon her everything poor George left. And should she be claimed at any time—why, her relatives will be only too glad to think that she has made such friends in England. You will draw up a statement as to the facts we know of, which, with my brother's letter, will explain everything. I feel that we shall never be any wiser, and now that we are certain that, though perfectly sensible, she has entirely lost her memory, I cannot for the life of me see any chance of her regaining her friends. What do you think ? Can I do better ? "

Mr. Grey answered with conviction that the Captain was doing his best in every way, and promised that in a day or two he would bring in the papers requested. He then asked his friend if he would consider him indiscreet if he asked what he meant when he said " though perfectly sensible she has entirely lost her memory. Do you mean that little Kitty remembers nothing ? "

The Captain got up hastily, and, standing with his back to the fire, said, " Of course not, Grey, but we have not talked about it yet,—you know what neighbours are ; a few rash words and a child is considered half-witted for life—and my darling is no more half-witted than you are ! But, with a few exceptions, her memory is, as regards the past, a blank. When first out of danger we anticipated complete recovery, for she recognized Jack, and, a day or two afterwards, Collins ; and then," here the Captain's voice thickened, " the blow came to my dear wife and me—she did not know us, and could not

speak. She came back to us, in fact, a baby! They, Jack and Collins, are the only links which attach her to a forgotten past. They are teaching her to speak."

Mr. Grey looked aghast, and ejaculated, "Speak!"

"Yes, speak! She cannot remember anything, and though I know, I feel that I know, that we could with very little difficulty recall her to the old life, yet we dare not. Slateman says did we attempt to do so he would not answer for her life or reason. The awful shock caused by the sight of her faithful friend and attendant lying motionless, combined with concussion of the brain, has injured something—I cannot explain. I tell Slateman I don't mind so long as the child grows a healthy woman and has full possession of her senses; the loss of the memory of eight short years is after all of no great importance. But, Grey, if you could see her adoration of Jack"—here the Captain used his pocket-handkerchief—"you would do as I am doing now. And poor Jack and Collins are sometimes at their wits' ends. Collins is the best man though! I cannot help laughing, for the man is a perfect actor! If it were not that he is the saving of us now, I don't think I could stand his aping that poor fellow Pierre. Bessie tells me that he began doing so from the first. Well, it has saved us now, for, though I don't think Kitty thinks him Pierre, yet he is connected in the poor child's brain in some inexplicable manner with her old friend. She does remember where she came from, Grey! Now that I am telling you a part, I may as well finish the whole story. A man should keep no secrets from either his lawyer or doctor. Grey, that poor child does remember that she came from France!

"A week ago we nearly lost her again. Last Tuesday—do you remember what a moonlight night it was?—I was returning from Sandgate, and as the night was chilly I chose the sheltered lower road. The tide was low, and the sea as calm as I have ever seen it. As I walked along I noticed a white speck on the cliffs by the steps near the Church; it seemed to dart in and out among the gorse bushes like a dog, or a stray sheep from the Leas meadows; in fact I felt sure that it must be the latter.

But it came down so quickly that I became interested, and so stood back in the shadow of an elder bush and watched. Whatever it was, it left the steps and got on to the road some little distance from where I stood—it was no sheep, it was a child! who crossed the road without the slightest hesitation, and following a little path went straight to the beach. I followed as quickly and noiselessly as possible. I seemed to recognize the gait of the fugitive. After descending the beach and crossing the sand, the child (whom by this time I had recognized as our Kitty) stepped on to one of the rocks which go some distance seawards, and carefully jumped from one to the other; as she got further from land the seaweed impeded her progress, but still she kept on. I had been dining, as you know, with Sir John, consequently was in uniform, and the thought struck me that if the poor child met me on a rock coming as from the opposite direction she might again mistake me—as she did on my return home—for poor George. So I stepped on to another ridge of rocks that ultimately joined the one on which was Kitty, and cautiously gained on her; and while she was searching a sure foothold on a rock immediately before her I faced her, opening my arms as though I expected her to jump into them. My stratagem was successful, for she screamed with delight and joy on seeing me, and I had the satisfaction of holding her safely without any apparent shock or disappointment. I then noticed that she had no shoes or stockings on, and that she was in her nightdress, fortunately covered by a white flannel dressing-gown. I had no trouble with her; she clung to me as if I had rescued her from some terrible misfortune. While carrying her shorewards I saw poor Collins crossing the sand. I shouted to him and he waited. Really in the moonlight he might have been Pierre; I was startled by the resemblance, and wondered what would happen next. My poor darling looked perfectly happy, smiled at him, and we all went home together, finding Mrs. Woodruff and Martha beside themselves with anxiety, and Jack searching in another direction from that taken by Collins. He came back half an hour later than we

did, and I shall never forget, Grey, the relief on that poor lad's face when I met him at the door with the good news.

"My impression is this: seeing the coast of France so near, and the rocks at low tide seeming to form a path in its direction, the poor child thought that by them she could regain her native land, and rejoin her mother, of whose death, as we know from poor George's letter, she is unaware. But had I not been on the spot, I dread to even think of what might have been her fate. So you see she does remember faintly her old life. I went to Slateman; he looked very serious, and the next morning we had the door of the pantry opposite this room closed and covered, as you will remark, with pictures and other odds and ends. This was another good move on the doctor's part, for when Kitty came downstairs a day or two ago, the first thing she did was to walk in that direction. I watched her as she did so. When she looked in vain for the door her expression, which had been almost tragic for so young a child, became relieved and happy again. So we must encourage forgetfulness; the past for our darling is too full of woe, and, if it pleases God, I mean her to live and die a happy Englishwoman. Yes, Grey, she is my child now; since that night when I rescued her on the rocks, I am the first in her affections. She thinks me poor George—her father, perhaps. She is a mystery, and will remain one, for, though her manners are so distinguished, I notice a peculiarity in them unnoticed by others. She has been taught to acquiesce with perfect courtesy, as though she had been brought up in the society of people considerably above her in rank. That is one aspect; then, again, I remember how naturally she accepted, as her due, mind you, the individual attention of Pierre. Lord X—— says she was astonished when he kissed her, and put out her hand as though a princess. I cannot make head or tail of anything, and none of us ever will; we must take her as she is, as lovely as a lily, a Fleur-de-Lis, and, like the lilies of France, banished from her native land. Here she is going to be 'the lass that loves a sailor.' Come now and see them all." And the

Captain, with a final flourish of his handkerchief, led the way into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Woodruff—not in mourning, but with a black bow on her shoulder—was sitting by the fire looking at her children, who were seated side by side on a sofa opposite, bending over a book which lay open on the table before them. Jack was teaching Kitty to read, and they were both very intent on their occupation. The two heads so close to one another were very beautiful. The boy's so powerful with its wavy chestnut hair showed up the elegantly shaped, essentially feminine, type of his little pupil's, which was now covered with short golden curls.

Mr. Grey looked admiringly at his host's family and then looked at that worthy, who seemed in a state of beatitude.

At length the Captain spoke. "Where is my Kitty?" and then the heads were lifted instantaneously, and, like a flash of lightning, a lovely form darted across the room and into the speaker's arms.

Mr. Grey spent a pleasant evening with the Woodruffs, and on Kitty's retiring for the night, was again able to give his advice on the all-important question of her future prospects.

Mr. Grey was a politician, and the leading authority in Folkestone on foreign affairs. He was suspected, too, of mildly revolutionary ideas, and before the awful excesses in Paris had indeed been more than doubtful of the divine right of kings. But although horrified, he still argued that the masses had been infuriated by long centuries of abuse and tyranny, and in spite of stormy and heated opposition and the temporary loss of a friend or two among the *habitués* of the *King's Arms* (the old inn situated on Grace Hill where the local club assembled), he still maintained that the old maxim "out of evil good may come" would be verified, and that upheavals of any sort, like thunderstorms, clear the air, the damage they cause being compensated by a revival of growths of every kind. "As in nature, so will it be with the French nation. It will emerge from the period of ruthless and abominable excesses,

strengthened and ennobled by the tornado of horror through which it is now passing."

This statement generally cleared the club room, and caused the irate Folkestonians in their righteous indignation to break the stems of many a long churchwarden clay pipe. One or two even moved their legal business to a more orthodox lawyer living at Ashford; but the majority argued that "they might do worse than stick to Grey, who, if he thought like a rascal, was no thief!"

So, as one in authority, Mr. Grey explained to Captain and Mrs. Woodruff the serious position of the French royal family. The execution of the King was, in his mind, certain, and presuming that Kitty was not the Admiral's child after all, but the daughter of some illustrious French noble, it was possible, indeed, most probable, that both her parents had lost their lives in the September massacres, and that their property had been confiscated by the Tribunal and given by it to some of its supporters. Consequently there would be very little chance for a girl to recover anything. And a name—— "What's in a name? Your brother's is good enough for any one I should think, Captain, and a nice little fortune goes with it. So let us go on as we are doing, and I will get all the deeds ready for you to sign before leaving."

With this, Mr. Grey bade his kind friends "good-evening," and left for his home, which was five doors only from the Woodruffs, at No. 9, Church Street.

But when in his own study the worthy man did not, though it was past ten, retire to rest. Not only was he the exponent of modern political views in his native town, but he was its only literary light. He was romantic to the highest degree, and the living picture he had so lately seen in the Captain's drawing-room inspired him to write a personal narrative of the romantic arrival of his little client. The theme was quite to his taste; indeed, had his imagination been fertile enough to have conceived it, it could not have been more enthralling. "There is no time like the present," he thought, "so I will begin at once." He lighted another candle, snuffed

the one already burning vigorously, and then and there began.

So congenial was his occupation that he wrote on till morning, and when the Church clock struck five he had only just finished; but satisfaction gleamed on his somewhat tired face as he placed the neatly written MS. in a legal envelope and consigned it to the security of a strong box.

Not a week after this the Captain was summoned to Portsmouth, and, shortly after, his delighted fellow-townsmen heard of his promotion to the rank of Admiral. Before leaving, he had presented Mr. Grey with a memento of his late brother. It consisted of a handsome snuff-box; a gift, doubtless, of some French friends, for it had evidently been made in Paris, and much valued by the Admiral, since it had been found in his pocket after death. It was made of tortoise shell, surrounded with diamonds; on either side was an initial, the letter "L." It had one peculiarity, its thickness, for the space for snuff was very limited considering the depth of the box.

Though much flattered by this proof of friendship, and satisfaction with his legal arrangements for the little girl, Mr. Grey felt quite unable to use such a magnificent article; so after much consideration he—without the knowledge of Mrs. Grey, for the best of women lose their heads when diamonds are about—consigned it to the strong box in which he had a few days previously placed his MS.

Kitty bore the Captain's departure better than those around her expected. During one day only did she seem to pine for him, and gradually she strengthened and grew firm and rosy, speaking English with no accent—aristocratic English taught by Jack. She never contracted the peculiarities of the Folkestone twang, nor did she, as many of those worthies, forget the letter which must be aspirated. She became one with her surroundings, differing from them in stately grace, and, what was more extraordinary, for it had not been observable before her illness, in reticence. She never wished to make friends among children of her own age in the

station of life to which the Woodruffs belonged. To the poor she was an angel of sweetness, unconventionality and love ; but to her supposed equals there was behind her gracious manner a barrier that the most presuming were never able to pass.

And so this lovely lily of France, this daughter of great soldiers, transplanted on English soil, tended and nurtured by sailors as brave as those heroes of her native land, grew into a blooming "English rose," the "Pride of Folkestone," and the light of Bessie Woodruff's life.

As days lengthened into months, and months into years in those wild and hazardous times when both her husband and her son were far away fighting for King and country, No. 4, Church Street would have been strangely desolate had not the new Kitty fallen as it were from the skies. But with this new Kitty—who, strangely, never questioned when Jack, too, was summoned to his post : it seemed natural to her that men should be sent for at a moment's notice—life was adorable, and the two lived happy, uneventful lives in the old house ; always hoping that one or both of the absent loved ones would soon return to them.

And there we will leave them for eight long years—years during which, in the child's old home, father and nurse watched and hoped, hoped and watched, with ever-increasing anguish and despair.

BOOK II

CHAPTER XIII

RECOGNITION

His worth is warrant for his welcome hither.
—*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

THE heat was intense, the sky cloudless, and not a breath of air, much less of wind, fluttered the flag which was hoisted on Folkestone Church tower. It hung as though overpowered with lassitude, and, by its indifference to the prevailing excitement in the town, annoyed the old naval pensioners who were watching it from the Church gate which led to the Bail. They had chosen that point of vantage not deeming it delicate to intrude upon Church Street so early in the morning.

"We shall have to whistle for the wind, mates, worse luck! as, if we whistle, we may bring on a gale, and that would spoil the show, and our arch, too! Let well alone is what I tell ye, and we'll make up with cheering!" shouted a petty officer minus an arm, otherwise a fine handsome-looking man.

"Ah, ah!" answered his listeners. And the party retraced their steps through the old Bail, by this flank movement gaining the Guildhall and the *King's Arms* without passing down Church Street. For it was before the Guildhall that the hero of the day would alight.

Yes! Jack was returning to "England, Home, and Beauty!" Jack, a grown man, now one of the bravest and most successful officers in King George's navy, admired and protected by Nelson himself, who saw in the gallant lad his ideal of what a sailor should be. Brave almost to the verge of rashness, he inspired those

under him with similar intrepidity; and he fully maintained the popularity of both his uncle and his father, that fact alone proving his merits, for the renown of Admiral George required an unusual amount of superiority in a nephew not to call forth invidious comparisons between that lamented officer and the young lieutenant. Fortunately, it was considered that "young Woodruff was a regular chip of the old block, and a fine pity that the Admiral had not lived to see the laurels his nephew would surely gather."

Yes, Jack was coming home after having seen much service, for the bells of Folkestone had rung out peals of joy when the news of the battle of Aboukir Bay reached England, and it was known that young Woodruff had distinguished himself, and that where all had proved heroes he had excelled, not only in fighting, but in humanity. Jack had been on Nelson's ship, and when that heroic sailor, lying wounded in his cabin, heard amid the din of battle that his gallant opponent's, Admiral Brueys', flagship was on fire and groped bleeding to the deck to give orders that the boats should be lowered and aid given the crew of the burning vessel, it was Lieutenant Woodruff who boldly took Nelson in his arms and carried him again to his cabin, with assurances that all would do their best; and who, as his hand was wrung by the wounded hero, listened with delight to these words: "Jack, my boy, if you do your best it's what I should wish to do, had I your youth and strength." But Jack did not wait to thank Nelson for this encouragement, and a minute after he was in the foremost boat.

The darkness was only relieved by the burning *Orient* and the flashes of the cannon as they poured out death and horror; for the engagement, though not general, was still maintained by four French line of battleships and four English. To and fro between these awful scenes did Jack and his brave shipmates ply their errands of mercy, in greater danger then than at any time during the action, for they all knew that the doomed vessel might blow up at any moment.

Yes, Jack had looked into the very jaws of death on

that fearful 1st of August, 1798, but he had never flinched, never wavered. The old tars looked admiringly at his boyish face and chestnut curls that were uncovered, for his hat had been lost very early in the evening. "Born for glory!" was their verdict. His dark blue coat was darker on the left side. This was noticed with concern by a petty officer. "You are wounded, sir," he said.

"Wounded, mates!" cried Jack, "wounded! The blood of Nelson, gentlemen! Forward!" That blood-stained coat had been the Oriflamme of the tars who manned the boats sent by Nelson to aid the valiant enemy.

Rewarded! And how rewarded? Not by promotion, which was his due; not by the admiration of his shipmates; but by the wring of another man's hand, and a few words whispered in a quiet cabin—"Just what I should have wished to do, Jack, but I knew that you would do it when you went."

So, when the despatches had been forwarded to London, Jack had been allowed to send with them a few lines to his mother, and a small packet to his cousin. That packet contained the coat stained with Nelson's blood. No wonder that the Church bells were rung with enthusiasm, and it was not to be wondered at either that the smell of rum-punch, with that of old Geneva, was prevalent in the town. For they were convivial souls those old Folkestonians, and got the best of liquors dirt cheap, for though they loved to fight for King and country they did not care to pay import duties; and we may safely assume that very little, if any, of the necessary components of their warm and exhilarating drinks had paid duty; and we may also envy them, and understand why these festive potations did so little harm to the imbibers, for the smuggled spirits were of first-rate quality. The coat, too, had been shown, and Folkestone had glowed with justifiable pride.

But all this was ancient history on the day of which we write. For two years had passed since Nelson had dealt his first telling blow on the successes of the French Republican forces in Egypt.

Our worthies gave one look of admiration at the triumphal arch that spanned the entrance to Church Street, and then turned into the parlour of the *King's Arms* to talk over the programme of the day. They were welcomed by the buxom hostess, but requested, "without wishing to offend, to keep as quiet as possible as the lady as was in No. 5 had not yet risen."

"What? not risen yet?" said the petty officer, who seemed spokesman of the company. "Not risen yet! Well, she is a beauty!"

"You are right there," said the landlady; "she is a beauty, and had I not set eyes on Miss Kitty I could not have believed it to be possible for any one to be so well favoured. There is a gentleman with her, and she is expecting another, who may arrive any time this forenoon. Some one of consequence, the maid said, for everything is ordered of the best, and the lady has chosen the blue room, leaving the red, which is much larger, for her guest."

"What's her name?" asked the petty officer.

"Oh, she is a lady of title. All she has with her is in fine style. A manservant came with her, but he left at once for Deal."

"What was he a-wanting there?" said the petty officer.

"He went to the Castle, I believe. Lor', they know their way about, I can tell you! Dover, too, they know it well. They are friends—the lady is, at least," said the landlady, "of Lord Nelson."

"Then," said the petty officer, "me and my mates know the lady, for she is Lady Hamilton, and as handsome as paint. Why, woman, you'll be having the Admiral here himself before you can look round!"

"Hush!" said the worthy woman. "Here comes the gentleman, the gentleman that's with her. Hush!"

The gentleman passed, and ascending the stairs was heard to knock at the door of, and then enter, the sitting-room reserved for the party of which he was a member. George Romney—for the newcomer was no other than that great artist—seemed quite unaffected by the heat; he was in fact brimming over with enthusiasm. The home-coming at which he was to assist—though, from

his not being acquainted with the hero of the day, as a spectator only—delighted him.

To the artistic temperament all that savours of romance or poetry gives pleasure, and it was a most joyous face that smiled its good-morning to the beautiful woman who had now joined him, entering the room by a door opposite to the one by which he had.

Emma, Lady Hamilton, returned the smile with easy good nature; but then that favourite of fortune was always amiable, being dowered with beauty and marvellous talents, "winning love where'er she passed." She was, at the moment of which we write, at the very zenith of her power. The wife of a great ambassador, the friend of a queen—that queen the daughter of Maria Theresa of Austria—and the beloved of Nelson. Though her beauty was of a most feminine type, her intellect was masculine in its power, and it was to this combination of mental and physical charms that she owed her extraordinary accession to rank and notoriety, for this spoilt child of fortune had been born in a cottage on the Yorkshire wolds.

As the favourite model of the great artist who was now her companion, her portraits enrich many of our public picture galleries, and Romney's genius has immortalized the beauty which captivated all beholders.

She was smiling so tenderly as she looked at her friend that he assumed a contrite air, as though guilty of some yet unacknowledged crime; and, putting his hand on his heart, the veteran artist of sixty-six bowed in abject submission to the smiler, ejaculating as he did so, "Venus, goddess of beauty and of love! your votary, your slave, would fain confess that he, like Eros, your tormenting son, has become enamoured of a mortal!"

A perfect actress, Lady Hamilton took at once the rôle of the goddess invoked by the speaker, and responded, "Rash truant from our court of Love, lay bare your crime!"

"That crime," answered the culprit, "can only be explained or understood when my sovereign lady has seen the cause, and shortly I hope to present to Venus—Psyche!"

Lady Hamilton laughed good-naturedly. "Really! And where does this paragon of beauty live?"

"Quite near us, up there!" and going to the window Romney pointed in the direction of Church Street. 'And I look to my sovereign lady to further my desires, and by means of her diplomatic genius to introduce me not only to the family of the fair mortal, but in such a manner that I may be permitted to perpetuate her girlish charms by my unworthy brush."

Most portrait painters are skilful physiognomists. The constant study of the human face, combined with the conversation which is generally indulged in at intervals during the sittings, gives an artist every opportunity of knowing the characters of his models, as well as their features. So Romney was aware that Lady Hamilton was not a jealous woman, and that the knowledge that he had found another subject to inspire him would give her pleasure not pain. He then proceeded to explain himself in more prosaic language. While he is doing so we will make the acquaintance of another individual who is rapidly joining us, and who will be found by all concerned to play no unimportant part in this story.

For it was no less a personage then Charles Maurice de Périgord de Talleyrand, known to posterity as Prince de Talleyrand, who was the guest expected by Lady Hamilton, and who, comfortably seated in a post chaise, is being driven down the Dover Hill, at the extreme foot of which lay the old town of Folkestone.

And so in a mesh of circumstances did the tangled threads of politics intermingle with the prospects of our heroine. For Lady Hamilton, through Lord Nelson, was a considerable force in England; and the first Consul Napoleon, wishing to make lasting peace with the great nation that had so often struggled bravely against his growing power, and aware that he had the support of Fox, hoped by the medium of Lady Hamilton to gain that of Lord Nelson; and, in order to effect this end, had sent his minister of foreign affairs on a secret mission to that fair lady.

Folkestone, from its proximity to the coast of France, had been chosen as a convenient and safe meeting-place,

and it was for this purpose that the party at the *King's Arms* had left the gaieties of London. This remarkable man, who for over forty years exercised such influence throughout Europe, was, in 1800, about forty-five years of age. His person was both aristocratic and handsome ; his complexion was as fair as a woman's ; his hair, which hung loosely over his shoulders, was of a bright golden colour. Added to these attractions was a still greater one, that of exquisite refinement ; for his countenance expressed an infinite charm, in which cheerfulness of mind seemed to contend with physical pain, for from his earliest infancy he had been compelled to struggle against fate. Lamed as a child, through the carelessness of his nurse, at sixteen he was forced to relinquish his birthright as Comte de Périgord in favour of a younger brother, and to exchange the congenial atmosphere of the Collège de Louis le Grand, where he had passed through all his classes with éclat, for the hateful grimness of the old Séminaire of St. Sulpice in order to prepare for the priesthood.

The anguish of the first intimation of the change in his prospects coloured the whole future of the lad, and his complete mastery of state-craft was doubtless made easy by the training in duplicity associated in most minds with an ecclesiastical seminary.

Uncared for, unloved, and with a heart craving for affection, he never murmured ; but, a keen watcher, he bided his time, buoyed up with hopes of the great change which he anticipated. A fugitive in America, during the Terror he had been proscribed as an émigré, and it was owing to the influence with Barras of two celebrated women—Mesdames de Staël and de la Bouchardie—and to the inspired eloquence of the poet Chénier, that he owed the permission to return to France. His great talents were at once recognized by Napoleon, and it was as the latter's minister and most trusted diplomatist, that he, in strict incognito, was intrusted with the mission before mentioned.

Dressed as the Captain of a merchant vessel, speaking English with perfect ease, and quite unknown at that time in England, there was but very little chance of his

personality being detected; and, with every facility of escape should he require to hasten his departure, he sat quite at his ease, and shortly before noon drove up to the door of the *King's Arms*.

Surprised at the crowd that had already assembled before the door, the Count immediately asked its cause, and was told it by the host who welcomed him. He smiled kindly, for with all his faults that of want of sympathy with the joys or sorrows of others cannot be enumerated. He bowed gracefully on entering the inn, and shortly after was received by Lady Hamilton and her friend.

The conversation was general, and the event of the day was alluded to. Lady Hamilton was loud in Jack's praise, and narrated many anecdotes of his bravery and unselfishness that had been related to her by Lord Nelson. The fame of his uncle and father was not allowed to pass without comment. The Count listened with the exquisite urbanity which distinguished him through life, and surprised his hearers by informing them that, when Admiral George Woodruff had been attached to the British Embassy in Paris, he had been acquainted with him.

"What a pity your incognito is so complete, otherwise what pleasure it would give his relations to welcome you to England!"

The Count bowed his acknowledgment to the speaker, and regretted not being able to see the family of his late acquaintance, but emphasized with much force the impossibility and imprudence of his very presence in England being known.

As he finished speaking, the bells rang out their peal of welcome, for a watchman on the Church tower had seen the post-chaise, in which sat our hero, on the Cheriton Road passing Broadmead.

Romney impatiently went to the window, and observed the much accelerated movements of the crowd. The Mayor in civic garb, and surrounded by the Corporation, stood with much dignity immediately in front of the Hall, holding the address in his hand. So solemn was his countenance that his gravity provoked Lady

Hamilton's mirth, and she was compelled to recount to her guest the sad experience of a former Mayor of Folkestone who, being unfortunately of short stature, availed himself of a stool from which he addressed the great Elizabeth, and whose self-esteem was rudely shattered by that lion-hearted spinster's reply; for when the address to which the Queen had listened patiently was finished, she simply answered: "You Folkestone fool, get off that stool!"

The laughing caused by the discomfiture of the unfortunate Mayor had hardly ceased, when Romney called out, "Come quickly! Look!" and, turning to Lady Hamilton, said, "Deign, oh Goddess of Beauty, to look upon Psyche! And in looking, forgive your slave!"

They all three looked in the direction of the triumphal arch. Just passing under it was a group consisting of two ladies and a manservant dressed in black livery, whose gait was somewhat affected. The crowd cheered the little party as it advanced, and then the servant bowed with such profoundness that it cheered again.

The Count smiled, and said, "Can it be possible that I, a Frenchman, find in Folkestone the manners of the old régime? Can that man be a refugee?" A moment after and the wine-glass that he held in his hand fell to the ground, for the ladies were now seen clearly, and the Comte de Périgord de Talleyrand had recognized one of them. With perfect indifference he apologized for his awkwardness, and, hidden behind a curtain, looked with interest on the scene beneath.

The ladies had now joined His Worship, who accorded them a hearty welcome, and with much ceremony placed them on his right hand, and, as they stood waiting, the occupants of the upstairs parlour at the *King's Arms* had ample time to scrutinize their appearance, and in low voices, for the window was open, to remark on the beauty of the younger.

Romney was almost uncontrollable in his enthusiasm, for the artist was to the fore, and in his mind's eye he could already see the picture created by his brain. "With white gossamer wings, and a butterfly just

hovering over that lovely head, the expression as it is now—just look! Observe that although this is a joyous moment, yet in those lovely eyes dwells a fundamental melancholy, a look as though for ever longing for a lost hope, for a lost joy. Did I not tell you that I had met an earthly embodiment of Psyche? and Psyche before she became immortal and beautiful as the girl is? It is that expression that gives her beauty its transcendent charm!"

To these rhapsodies the veteran artist found responsive sympathy, for Lady Hamilton was enthusiastic in her praise, and the Count acquiesced, evidently much impressed by the grace of the young girl who occupied the post of honour on the Mayor's right hand; for Folkestone, as well as the Captain (now Admiral), had adopted the little wanderer as the daughter of its brave and lamented townsman, and, as his representative, our old friend Kitty, now a grown-up young lady of sixteen, was given the place to which her late father's position entitled her. In this, Bessie Woodruff aided and abetted the authorities, effacing herself, for, as she said on many occasions, "Kitty can do all this as to the manner born. She is never fluttered or weary; she takes to public functions as though they were every-day occurrences. While I——" Mrs. Woodruff paused, words failing her.

And what has Time done for Kitty—Time which in our early years is kind and beautifying, a giver of beauty, love, joy, hope and strength—Time, that when life's meridian is passed, takes with ever quickening haste all these gifts away, ruthlessly, brutally, leaving us—what? Something to the old that is very precious, something that gives a grace to old age, and makes it to the holy-minded more beautiful to the spirit than the charms of youth, for Time, that takes the mortal attractions one by one from us, will cease some day—"the Time of calendars will not last for ever," and immortality succeeds mortality, and everlasting youth, old age? Well, Time had expanded a lovely bud into a still more beautiful flower; for Kitty's beauty more than exceeded the promise of her childhood.

As she stood between the worthy Mayor and Mrs. Woodruff, she towered above them, for she was very tall, quite five feet ten; but this great height of hers never asserted itself, for her grace of movement and perfect deportment prevented the gawkiness observable in many women who are over tall. She had an air of the greatest distinction, and looked what she really was—an aristocrat of the first water. With every beauty, as in childhood, accentuated, there was that mystery of expression (for no other word can express the unfathomable depth of something not definable which dwelt in her dark blue eyes), and it was that look that crowned her charms. The great artist, who, at the very moment of which we write, was sketching her, had rightly named her Psyche.

And all this festivity, all this expectation, was set to the music of the bells—"joyous bells, merry bells."

And to the welcome which they announced did the post-chaise, now long past Broadmead, hasten. The postboy gave another flick of the whip to the off horse, and looked behind him at the gentlemen in the carriage. For Jack was not alone—in fact, he looked rather slender and unimportant by the side of his portly companion, who, by his breadth of shoulder, almost required a post-chaise to himself. For time to the middle-aged, while busy, as we have before hinted, at reclaiming former gifts, is sometimes generous as regards breadth; and our old friend the Captain, now Admiral John, had evidently been liberally treated, for he was literally what his old shipmates later on in the day told those who were unfortunately unable to be present: "Twice the man he were afore." But he carried his weight of body with dignity, and looked "as one as would scare those darned Monsieurs terrible!"

His jolly face beamed with satisfaction; his three-cornered hat was on one side, in fact he looked a real everyday human sailor, while by comparison, our Jack—for Jack is our hero—"for we all love Jack!"—looked very much the impersonation of a young lady's "dream of a man"; and had his portrait been published as the frontispiece to the "Keepsake," or some other

lady's magazine of that day, it might have caused as much havoc among its fair readers as the original had done to the enemies of his country.

There were but very few houses in the Sandgate Road in 1800, and they were considered country houses, for the old town ended with the Guildhall. The postboy gave another flick of the whip to his already galloping horses as he passed these houses, and dashed down the incline in fine style. However, before he drew up, the presence of the Admiral had become known and in the vociferous acclamations of surprise and joy at his unexpected return it is my sad fate to relate that Jack was forgotten! For the Mayor in his flurry dropped the address, and Kitty for once forgot her stately grace, and, as the former rushed to the post-chaise to grasp the Admiral's hand, she pushed him aside and threw herself into the newcomer's arms, ejaculating, "Father! Father!" And it was only his mother who remembered Jack!

CHAPTER XIV

JACK'S WELCOME HOME

Such as I was, such will I be,
Your own; what would ye more of me.
—*Earl of Surrey.*

THE laughter of the three spectators from the windows of the *King's Arms* at this unexpected change of heroes was fortunately not heard by those standing beneath them, for the buzz of excitement and the hubbub of the greetings with which our old friend was welcomed to his home again would have drowned anything under a brass band. They were as varied as the greeters. "John!" "Jack, old boy!" "Admiral, you do me honour!" "The glory of your country!" "Sir!" "Master!" "Captain!" "Old friend!" "Old boy!" All these appellations were shouted in various keys in the bass clef, the speakers being in many cases hoarse with excitement, and were joined with the National Anthem sung by the old naval pensioners who, as they could not get near their old commander, felt that they must do something to announce their presence, so that if he could not see them he should at any rate hear them.

The bells pealed, and our old friend, Sally Pilcher, who was looking out of her bedroom window, rang a handbell furiously. The confusion was beyond description, and the Admiral, with one arm round his Kitty, shook hands all round like a Briton.

The tears ran down Lady Hamilton's cheeks; the Count marvelled at the good feeling and patriotism shown by all present, and Romney regretted his inability to

paint the scene—" one to which only Hogarth could have done justice." Jack, with his mother, looked on as delighted spectators, and it was not until quite half an hour after that the Mayor remembered the address, and inquired if any one had picked it up.

" What is it, Baker ? " shouted the Admiral. " Address, address ! Why, here it is in my pocket ! " and the Admiral, with much difficulty, pulled out of his pocket a much soiled and evidently trodden-on document. " I'll read it some day, all right ! I know you mean well—'deeds, not words,' is my maxim. And you rascals have shown me that you are glad to see me home again, though the Lord knows how you knew I was coming ! Well, I will answer it, I know what you've said—they are all alike, bless you ! " And he shouted in an even louder tone : " Friends, the perils I have been through are more than compensated by my welcome home. And let me tell you that as long as England has a ship and a crew to man her, your homes will be guarded and your property secure. Three cheers for King George, and Nelson, the bravest of the brave ! " and the Admiral cheered so lustily that his wife implored him to moderate his efforts by a timely " John ! you are getting purple."

Kitty during all this had hung on her uncle's arm ; her cheeks were of a vivid rose colour, and her golden curls on their background of dark blue showed off our worthy friend's broad breast even better than the star that glistened on the further side. In fact, they both looked " so tender like " that the spectators were quite moved, by the marked contrast they presented—strength and clinging grace ; promise and realization ; protector and protected. And the love that beamed on the sunburnt face of the burly Admiral prompted a sightseer from Deal—no other than our old acquaintance, Rafferty—to testify his appreciation of the beauty of the young girl, and as a sure method of gaining the good graces of the Admiral, to sing his best song. As we know, it was of no want of aplomb that that worthy could ever be accused, and, with ready wit, he gave out the " Lass of Richmond Hill," changing the name of the

locality to that of Folkestone—"On Folkestone Hill there lives a lass, more bright than May-day morn."

That was the climax, for Jack joined in the song, meaning every word he sang. Poor fellow! What were thrones to him? There was nothing to him but Kitty. "I'd thrones resign to call thee mine, Sweet Lass of Folkestone Hill." Such singing had never before been heard in Folkestone, for Lady Hamilton's exquisitely trained voice joined with that of Rafferty's, and Jack led the chorus.

When the song was finished, the Admiral stepped back, and Kitty stood alone and gave her usual curtsies, and, looking in the direction of the window of the inn, made one to its occupants. Lady Hamilton and Romney looked at one another breathlessly; the former turned to express her astonishment to the Count, and to ask him if he had ever seen more grace at the Tuileries? But she looked in vain. The Count had silently left the room.

To the present generation it may seem extraordinary that a woman with the antecedents of Lady Hamilton should ever have entered society; but a careful study of the history of the period in which she lived will show that hers was no isolated case. That great upheaval, the French Revolution, had changed all things, and talent with beauty, backed by powerful protection, took a woman anywhere. With a few exceptions the morality of the women who led Continental society was as questionable as their birth, and if Emma Hart was the most lowly born of these adventuresses, she was the most talented, and eventually the most to be pitied. The cynical Frenchman who was then her guest, an aristocrat of aristocrats, gave his name and station to a woman whose life resembled hers, but though Princess Talleyrand equalled Lady Hamilton in beauty, her stupidity and naive ignorance have never been surpassed. She may be said to have been the personification of Mrs. Malaprop, and everything she said, a thing one would not wish to say. This little digression will explain the welcome given to Lady Hamilton when she joined the Admiral, as she did at the termination of Rafferty's song.

He introduced her at once to his wife and niece.

Jack, with rather a fierce look, came forward, and was welcomed with the easy good grace of an old friend. Romney, too, was presented, and rejoiced at the prospect of the complete realization of his wishes.

"Come to supper, when we shall be a little quiet; till then all our time will be devoted to our friends. Mrs. Woodruff is giving a dinner to the sailors, and we shall all assist."

Lady Hamilton was unable to accept the Admiral's kind invitation for that evening, but accepted one to dinner on the following day.

By this time the wearied bell-ringers put in their appearance, and were lauded for their skill. "We must bide awhile now, Admiral, but we'll ring again fine to-night!"

"You've rung your last peal to-day, lads. I know you all; coroner's inquests are not to my fancy. There'll be too much liquor about for bell-ringing later on! The Church door will be locked! Sinclair, tell the Vicar my wishes!"

After this impressive warning the Admiral and the Mayor, with Kitty between them, headed the procession to No. 4, Church Street. Jack followed with his mother on one arm and the "Mayor's lady" on the other. So secondary was his position, that Lady Hamilton's kind heart felt for him. "For even the girl does not look at him!" was her comment to her friend.

"I have noticed it! I have noticed it!" said Romney. "You ladies are all alike. The peculiarity you allude to is a ruse which you all employ. Assumed indifference! Poor Jack! I envy the well-favoured lad! Ah! if youth could but return to me! He will suffer for some weeks, I daresay, but he is bound to win at last. I am going to assist at the dinner—and you?"

"I must rest," said Lady Hamilton, "and amuse the Count."

The old market place behind the Guildhall had been prepared for the entertainment, which was on a most liberal scale; and though the heat was most unusual for so early in the summer, the June evening was long, and suitable for an outdoor festival. Later on in the

evening, when the dark had already deepened into early night, Kitty stood in the passage leading from the Market Place through the Guildhall. She had not been a moment by herself—for Collins had only just left her in order to take a message to the Admiral who was still presiding at the principal table—when she was surprised at being addressed by an individual dressed as a sea captain, who spoke to her in some unintelligible language that yet seemed familiar, as did something in the manner of this stranger. She listened, bewildered, frightened, yet enthralled. Her startled face seemed to mystify and confuse the speaker, for after a moment's hesitation, while evidently awaiting a reply, the foreigner bent with stately grace and, taking her hand, kissed it with marked respect. But Collins was now by her side, and the stranger disappeared in the gloom.

Collins gave but one look at his mistress' widely dilated eyes to know that some mischief had happened during his absence. He spoke, but received no answer. The light of the lanthorn under which they stood showed him a face like the one he remembered only too well. "She is took bad again, or my name is not Collins," said he. "What am I to do?"

He began to address her, to coax her; then he changed tactics and tried to act as though he did not notice the change. But Kitty stood as though turned to stone. Collins, nearly at his wits' end, was about to shout for assistance when he heard Jack's voice bidding good-night to some one, and then the welcome sound of his footsteps entering the passage. He left his young mistress and whispered a word or two into Jack's ear.

"It's only Master Jack, miss," said Collins. "Master Jack as is come to take you home!"

Jack looked with horror on his cousin's face, but he was a man now and used to taking the initiative in times of danger, so he took her by the hand quite calmly, and said, "Kitty! My Kitty!" It was quite enough, for before the last "Kitty" had left his lips, his Kitty's arms were around his neck, and though his fine ruffles were wet through by the tears which seemed to flow without intermission, what did that matter? for all

Kitty said between her sobs was quite sensible—she even called herself a goose, and said that she had no need to be frightened, for the stranger had only been courteous and kind, but it was something she could not explain that had startled her, but that when Jack came, the funny feeling went—and she clung to Jack as in the old times when the same paroxysms had taken possession of her.

Arm in arm, as of old, they returned to their home, and when they reached the brass knobs that guarded the steps that led to the front door, Kitty stood on the lower step and turned, and again threw her arms round her cousin's neck, saying, " Jack ! dear Jack ! welcome home ! For there is no one in the world so precious to us all, is there, Collins ? " To which that worthy, who was looking hard at the Church tower, answered, " You are right there, Miss Kitty, you are right there ! "

So Jack got the welcome home that he would have chosen had he dared anticipate such joy, and, though it is rank ingratitude and heresy to record it, one far more appreciated than the address would have been, had that document ever been read—which it was not for over fifty years after, for the Admiral put it away with many others. And we can at the same time forgive Jack for dreaming, which he did that very night, with his friend Lord Nelson hale and hearty, that he, Jack Woodruff, was Lord High Admiral of England, and that Kitty, darling Kitty, was his wife !

Happy Jack ! Was not Lady Hamilton's pity slightly misplaced ?

CHAPTER XV

THE STRUGGLE

He that is thy friend indeed,
He will help thee in thy need.
—*Passionate Pilgrim.*

AFTER the excitement of the day it was not to be wondered at that most of the inhabitants of Folkestone slept soundly, so soundly indeed, that the thunderstorm which raged during the latter part of the night hardly disturbed them. Jack, as we know, dreamed pleasant dreams, and lay with happy smiles upon his handsome face. But there may have been a few in the town to whom slumber was denied ; and had any belated reveller passed the *King's Arms*, he or she would have remarked that from two of the windows candlelight could be seen. For the occupant of the red room found sleep impossible. He had retired early in order to prepare dispatches that were to be forwarded to France the next morning. For some part of the evening he had been aided by his private secretary, who was with him, disguised as a servant. The table in the centre of the room was covered with papers ; a box full of candles stood open, ready to replace those burning in the four silver candlesticks which stood, two on the table, and two on the mantelpiece, where the draught from the open window caused them to gutter wastefully. Their wicks were long and dismal-looking, for since the departure of the secretary they had not been snuffed. The snuffers stood at hand, but to the sole occupant of the room, lost in retrospection, such trivialities as candles had ceased to exist.

The windows were wide open, for the heat was intense. The muslin blinds fluttered with the wind, which blew

in gusts. The thunder rolled and crashed overhead, and flashes of lightning gave a weird effect to the outside darkness. The Count de Talleyrand walked up and down the room unceasingly. He had taken off his coat and waistcoat, and in his fine cambric shirt and tight knee-breeches looked picturesque. His hair, generally so studied in its arrangement, looked rough and natural, resembling a child's in its luxuriance. His blue eyes were fixed, and a hard expression made his mouth look even firmer than was its wont. At intervals he sat down, and, leaning on the table, bent his head upon his hands, but only for a few moments, for again he would start that unceasing to and fro.

At last the struggle seemed over. The peals of thunder came at rarer intervals, and the rain, which till then had been scanty, poured in torrents, as though the very clouds had burst. The struggle was over—nature had spoken, the thirsty earth was refreshed, new hopes were already awaking, for here and there a bird answered its mate. The fragrance of vegetation, made more intense by the refreshing and life-giving moisture, impregnated the morning air, and in the east the dawn was visible.

And in the Count's face all these changes, all these variations, could be seen. For if the elements had been at war with one another, what about the conflict that had raged in the man's conscience ? For it had been a struggle between wrong and right, revenge and forgiveness, defiant pride and Christian charity. It was in his power to return good for evil ; for though that evil was, he knew, caused by a too ready belief in a malignant tongue, yet the smart caused by that ready belief had been none the less acute from that knowledge. He, the despised ex-abbé, the renegade priest, the contemptible youth, had it in his power, did he mean to forgive, to say : " Though you are the noblest of the noble, though you are a living example of all that is chivalrous in France, you have wronged me. You, who refused to cross swords with a lad to whom his very own had been cruel, will for ever be under an obligation to that injured lad, for had you chosen, had you been less gullible, you could have made him as great a man as you are. For your

evil I can return good ; you gave me unhappiness, I can give you joy ; for my miserable isolation I can give you domestic bliss ; for your contempt, I can restore to her home your adored daughter ; for the cheek you smote I can turn—not the other, but something even more divine in its abnegation of vengeance,—for vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord.' "

At last he smiled, and sitting down, wrote a short note, and going to the door, opened it and left the room for a few moments ; when he returned, the note was no longer in his hand.

He threw himself on the bed and reviewed the past, to him one of isolation and unhappiness, for, whatever successes middle-age may give, they are but a sorry compensation for an unhappy and neglected childhood. His childhood had been miserable, and, as he recalled its few bright spots, the memory of one fête of St. Hubert came to his mind. His uncle, the Bailli de Talleyrand, had taken him to visit the Comte de Vaux to celebrate the opening of " la chasse," and he stood in memory, on the terrace before the Château. But he was not by himself—a girl—the living image of the girl who was now so near him (only in the next street)—stood by his side, so tall that she looked older than her years, for she was only thirteen. " Louise ! my Louise ! " he murmured —and he had loved her as Jack loved Kitty, for it was the sight of Jack, and the adoration written on his face that had so tortured the diplomatist, the ex-abbé, the perjured priest. He wrung his hands at these thoughts. Jack, the brave sailor could love, while he—— And then, only a few weeks after, he had returned to Paris, with his heart full of all he intended doing in order to be worthy of Louise, his first love. And when he had asked his uncle, if he thought that his pretentions as a future son-in-law would be agreeable to the Comte de Vaux, his uncle had thought his ambition only ordinary, and likely to be rewarded by the consent of all parties interested. Then he had been called into the parlour and his change of prospects not broken to him gently, but the cassock of the hated priesthood thrown over his collegian's uniform. He had ventured only one protest,

one remonstrance : " But I wish to marry, why should I not ? I love Louise de Vaux ! "

And his mother had laughed at him when she answered ; brutally laughed at him ! " You are lame ! And she is already betrothed to the Duc de Verminoux ! "

He had retorted with spirit ! " Why, he is her senior by twenty years ; she can never love him ! "

But his mother had answered. " He is the handsomest of the handsome, and the bravest of the brave. Half the women in France would love him, but he will have none of them."

After that, he had said no more. And then the quarrel, one that had no cause but the evil tongues of others, and the Duc's contempt, and a retort of his, repeated to the angry boy, and his challenge treated as one unworthy of response. But with passing years a change had come, for his ready wit had made him powerful friends, and life had become delightful, but there was always that hidden wound.

And the wakeful man, when the dawn was strengthening into daylight, remembered when and where he had first seen Jack's beloved. As he was standing one sunny morning in La Cour de la Reine, a carriage of unusual splendour had advanced in his direction. The menservants were dressed in the livery of the Duc de Verminoux. He had stood back under a tree, not wishing to be noticed, but his presence had been remarked, for the Duchesse with a smile—she had always been his friend—took her baby from its nurse's arms, and held it up as though to show him. He had bowed, but he remembered that tears had dimmed his sight. And it was not until eight years after that he saw that child again, and then she was in a royal carriage, preceded by an escort of the garde de corps. The sullen populace murmured, "They come, the children of France!" and he had looked with interest on the little party—the Dauphin, with the blue ribbon across his childish breast, sat smiling and gentle by the side of Madame Royale, a taciturn-looking girl with the presentiment of future woe upon her troubled countenance. But the other occupant of the carriage, who was she ? The little

lady-in-waiting, the darling of the Court! No wonder that the onlookers forgot their grievances at the sight of that sunny face. She sat as though unaware of the crowd while the royal children bowed as etiquette demanded, but at last the cries of "Vive Mademoiselle de Verminoux" brought forth recognition, and after a few words addressed her by the Dauphin, the lovely child had kissed her hand repeatedly, and the carriage was out of sight before the acclamations of admiration had ceased.

He shuddered as he thought of the murder, it was nothing less than murder, of that child's mother, and the memory of his own grief—memory!—why he grieved for her now as though eight long years had not passed since the tragedy!

"If I grieve now," thought he, "what about the Duc? Fortune favoured my beloved in giving her to a better man than I could ever have been. Had Louis de Verminoux been my friend and protector I might have followed the path he would have shown me, but he would have been always the commander, I could never have reached his level."

Sleep was now quite impossible, for the sun had risen, so he calmly determined to put together the links of evidence already obtained; for both he and his supposed servant had mingled with the merrymakers in order to gain as much information as possible. Unfortunately, Rafferty had already left the town on his return journey to Deal before the Count had discovered that he might be the one to supply the missing link to what was already an almost complete chain of evidence. Accidental likenesses do sometimes exist, and without positive proofs of the identity of their adopted daughter with the missing Gabrielle de Verminoux, the Woodruffs might dispute the father's claims, for evidently the girl remembered nothing. He was horrified when he recalled the stony expression on her face, for the stranger who addressed Kitty in the dark entry of the Guildhall was, as doubtless the reader has already divined, the Count de Talleyrand. And she did not remember French, that was another difficulty, for no one that was not inti-

mately acquainted with the Woodruffs knew how, even now, there was still great danger of Kitty losing her reason. And then, Jack's claims as a possible husband: "That will be no impediment," thought the Count, "happily; for the Duc will waive all considerations of rank in order to make his adored child happy."

At one moment he resolved to communicate all his convictions to the Admiral; but then, why spoil that good man's happiness? No, he would wait, and when all the proofs were in hand he would send them to Verminoux, and with them a letter—in his astute brain he turned over and over again the wording of that letter. He was determined to put all pride on one side, and to show the Duc that through life he had misjudged him. And then he slept.

Three hours afterwards the chambermaid rapped loudly at the door, and was answered; and, shortly after, the Count joined his friends in the parlour.

While an émigré in America, the Count, to whom a life of inaction was impossible, and who saw, in the early days of the Revolution, but little prospect of returning to France, had, with a friend, speculated in the shipping trade, and at the time of which we write was still the possessor of a merchant ship; consequently, the rôle he was assuming in Folkestone was very suitable, and one of which he was a complete master.

This being the case, neither he nor his companions were in the least alarmed when, during breakfast, the sound of a lusty voice, and later on of heavy footsteps ascending the stairs, intimated the approach of the Admiral. He knocked loudly at the door, which was opened immediately by Lady Hamilton, who was delighted at this proof of friendship.

He looked surprised at seeing a stranger present, but being introduced to him without hesitation as Captain Van Leydan, of Antwerp, suspicions of any sort would have been unwarrantable, and knowing how much useful information can be given to naval commanders by swift merchantmen, and the Dutch being fine sailors, "as old England knew too well," the Admiral gave him a hearty shake of the hand and a welcome to Folkestone.

Captain Van Leydan bowed his acknowledgments, and expressed the pleasure given him by his visit to Folkestone, of which much had been caused by his—he might say their—being spectators of the festival of the previous day. He then proceeded to compliment him on his family, and alluded to the great beauty of his daughter.

"Daughter! She is no daughter of mine," answered the enchanted Admiral, who had been taken on what the French call the "feeble side." "Kitty—my Kitty, is my niece." And he looked rather stern, as he did always when he made the next announcement—"She is my brother's daughter, and for that reason, dearer to me than anything else on earth! Ah!" looking at Lady Hamilton and Romney, "Mrs. Woodruff and Jack have only themselves to blame for that, for they set me the example!" and the speaker roared with delight at this explanation.

There is no time like the present, and great men, whatever may be their line of greatness, always avail themselves of opportunity; and this one was not allowed to escape by Romney, who now chimed in with, "As an artist, I do not wonder at your adoration; but Mrs. Woodruff, too, is very handsome; and Jack—well, he is your son!"

"Son, indeed!" cried our old friend, now quite at his ease. "Why, he is going to have his portrait painted, a presentation portrait to be given his mother by his old shipmates."

"Who has the commission?" asked Romney.

"Lawrence," was the answer.

Then Romney drew himself up and said, "Sir, you have just informed us," he waved his hand in the direction of those present, "that your niece was your dearest; surely you will permit me to paint her portrait? I am a humble artist, it is true, but one who has proved that he, inspired by beauty, can reproduce—imperfectly, without a doubt—a not indifferent representation of the living charms of his models." And, looking towards Lady Hamilton, "Speak for me, dear friend."

Lady Hamilton entreated the Admiral not to lose

such an offer, and asked him if he had seen any of her portraits? As, should he have done so, it would be impossible for him to demur to entrusting Mr. Romney with a task so congenial. For," said she, "since yesterday I can do nothing with him. He is simply longing to begin, and," added the fair ambassadress, "I must tell you that he has already named both model and picture, Psyche."

"And well named too!" said the Admiral, "for she is, in my humble opinion, worth a dozen Venuses! Paint her portrait, sir! Why, you do me honour! When will you begin? Not to-day, for I want to take you all to the cherry gardens; the cherries are ripe; the storm has cleared the air, and the grass will be dry before noon—will you give us the pleasure of your company?"

Lady Hamilton and the delighted artist accepted, but Captain Van Leydan refused, owing to a previous engagement, but he volunteered to walk with the Admiral to Sandgate.

It was still early, the Church clock had but just struck ten, when the gentlemen left the *King's Arms*. They turned up Church Street and crossed the Churchyard. As they passed the vault in which lay the Admiral's little daughter by the side of "Pierre, a Frenchman," the Admiral reverently uncovered his head; his courteous companion did likewise.

"My poor child lies there," said he; "look!" and he pointed to the name on the marble tablet. "My poor Kitty! They would have made a lovely pair, the two of them, poor George's and mine."

With a more astute subject Talleyrand would have employed other means to gain his end, but with the trusting and open-hearted there is but one way, and that is the royal road, the direct road, so he took it.

"And your niece's mother? Did she lose her too? Perhaps as an infant?"

"No, no," gasped the Admiral, "she was murdered! I have it written in my brother's own handwriting—murdered on the 10th of August, 1792, in Paris. Yes! in Paris by those reprobates of Frenchmen. She must have been an angel, that woman, and as lovely as one, for

although I am partial to my own, I fail to see any resemblance in our Kitty to poor George. She must be the image of her murdered mother. I live to revenge her—this in confidence. When engaged with the enemy, if French, and they are as a rule, I think of Kitty's mother, and it does not go any easier with them for that, I can tell you! She must know too, for I believe the dead know more than we imagine, how I reverence her as the mother of my darling! And I hope that she knows—I hope that she hears me now!" and the gallant God-fearing sailor again took off his hat, not noticing in his excitement that Van Leydan did the same—"that although her child is an orphan, she has never felt the want of parents; that her child has been the first consideration in her present home; that I have represented her father, and that my wife has been a most devoted mother! And Jack!—she knows, bless your heart, she knows!" and, hat in hand, the speaker looked heavenward.

The Count, who had listened with bated breath to this confession of faith, stood silently wondering at the great heart of the Englishman. "No wonder that he is welcomed back as a hero," thought he. "And why should I disturb this good man's bliss? Could Louise's child be happier than now?" It came like a thief in the night, that excuse—"Why should I restore to my enemy an adored daughter, and deprive this honest friend of the light of his eyes? *One* must be unhappy." Talleyrand knew his man, and that, however great might be the pang of separation, yet if the Admiral were to suspect that Kitty's father were living, he would be the first to communicate to him the fact of his daughter's existence, and the cause of her mistaken identity. So, though previously on the point of asking his advice, he resolved to hold his tongue and await the result of his visit to Deal, where he intended driving later in the day.

They left the Churchyard and gained the cliffs. The road called the Slope, which connects the lower Sandgate Road with the Leas was still unmade in 1800; a flight of steps was the only means by which pedestrians could either ascend or descend the cliffs; the path by

the cliffs to Sandgate commenced at the Church gate. It was a narrow footway, on one side of which was a fairly high bank, but on the other, nearer the sea, there was no protection whatever.

The Leas, even then called by that name, were breezy downs, which with unbroken verdure connected the old town of Folkestone with its neighbour, Sandgate. Fashion may have its attractions, but it is much to be doubted could one of its votaries recall from the dim past the old Leas of Folkestone as they were in 1800, that he or she would not much regret the wild beauties they then possessed, for they were nature's gardens, and a treasure ground for botanists; for bee-orchids, fly-orchids, and other flowering members of the same tribe were to be found upon its sunny banks. The gorse, with which the cliffs were covered, loaded the air with the sweetness of its blooms, and in sheltered corners there were generally some bushes to be found gaily flowering even in mid-winter—hence the old maxim, a favourite one among the old Folkestonians, "When the gorse is out of blossom, then is kissing out of season."

The fragrance of wild thyme, mingled with that of peppermint, added an aromatic perfume to that of the gorse. Bees hummed, birds sang, and all these country delights were but half the attractions of that enchanting spot. For, if on one side, Nature presented her most alluring aspect in lovely peaceful meadows with their background formed by the chain of Folkestone Hills, which, if not lofty, are graceful in their varied formations, far beneath surged and rolled the bright blue sea, and from the rocks, covered with seaweed, with which the shore was fringed, a delightful breath of ozone ascended.

The Admiral was quite alive to all these beauties, and pointed out many a landmark to his companion. He was emphatic in his regret that Van Leydan could not join his family party, as, had he been able to do so, they would have ascended Caesar's Camp together, "For," added he, "I have a pony quite up to your weight. May I ask how you injured your leg?"

"It was the result of an accident in early childhood," answered Van Leydan. "And I need hardly tell you

that it has been the cause of every misfortune or disappointment I have experienced."

"Tut, tut!" said the Admiral. "I've known many a man with a wooden leg give his country glory and honour, and you are one that will leave a name yet, and a name associated with great deeds, or my name is not John Woodruff. Cheer up!"

By skilful manœuvres on the part of the Count, the conversation was again turned to the subject in which he was so much interested, and he heard with astonishment of Kitty's wealth. Evidently Louise's child had been most favoured, for she had everything in her English home, though on a more unpretending scale, both as regards rank and fortune, than that to which she was entitled by birth. All his sympathies were now veering to his burly acquaintance, and he found himself regretting his visit to Folkestone—for his mission was a political failure. Pitt had the nation, as the Admiral expressed it, by the ear, and Fox was played out.

They descended the hill into Sandgate, and, while the Admiral paid his visit, the Count sat by the shore. On the return of the former, they retraced their steps to Folkestone, and both men—the open-hearted brave sailor, and the skilful crafty diplomatist—never forgot the charms of that delightful walk, during which Kitty's fate was sealed.

CHAPTER XVI

RAFFERTY WINS THE DAY

> Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight
> With hearts more proof than shields.
>
> —*Coriolanus.*

THE seafaring inhabitants of Deal, though they appreciated the dash and go of our former acquaintance, Rafferty, would have been dumbfounded had they known (which they never did) that he, their pal, their tyrant, the smuggler, the ex-convict, had by his untrained native wit held his own for three hours against the most astute diplomatist of Europe. Even with the calmness of judgment given by a lapse of more than a hundred years it seems incredible. But incredulity cannot change facts, for they are stubborn things, as we all know.

It happened in this wise.

In the street immediately behind Beach Street, and appropriately called Middle Street, in a substantially built house, dwelt Shifty Raff. The house, which still exists in fairly good condition, is a well-built specimen of the Queen Anne period. Its high, tiled roof, with projecting attic windows, and its overhanging eaves with their wooden supports, accompanied by the warmth given by the red colour of the bricks with which it was built, gave it a mellow air of comfort and well-being much appreciated by its master, who, after his enforced absence in a foreign land, found home a perfect paradise, and a haven of repose. His satisfaction on returning was still neither withered by time, nor staled by custom, for he had only reached England ten days or so before his visit to Folkestone. That this satisfaction was shared by Mrs. Rafferty is open to doubt, and his un-

expected arrival we may be sure was not attended by raptures of delight on the part of his offspring. But it is pleasant to record that a week after the return of this unappreciated husband and father matters had mended, and both wife and children were happier than they could ever have thought it possible to be under the circumstances.

The house, on the day of which we write, was in perfect order from top to bottom. The doorstep was dazzling in its whiteness, the front door stood open, and the passage that led to the sitting-room could be plainly seen, for the simple reason that there was a step down to enter the house from the street. A cat sat on the window sill, meditating on the wariness of birds, and occasionally glancing skywards as flights of plump songsters passed overhead, giving vent, as they did so, to derisive taunts on the inability of their enemy to do them harm.

In the sitting-room sat our friend in studied unconcern, as though enjoying the quiet necessary to a man of his years after a morning devoted to business. He was but little changed in appearance ; enforced sobriety had improved him, and one of the results of his imprisonment was that he never drank again. He was quite alone, and the silence pervading the house indicated that the other rooms were unoccupied, as indeed they were, for Rafferty was not likely to give any member of his family who might have inherited his or her father's thirst for information a chance of overhearing what might be talked of in the parlour, where he would shortly receive the Dutch gentleman, a captain of a merchant vessel trading in the East. Rafferty winked at the thought.—" Dutch Captain ! I know him and what he is after ! "

To those who have not listened in childhood to the traditional stories told by the old residents of the south-eastern coast, the wonderful, and perfectly unscientific, communication maintained by the smugglers from port to port seems almost incredible. Long before Rafferty received the note from Folkestone he was aware that " two foreign chaps was inquiring of, and asking

of, all about that little gal as was, as is now Miss Kitty Woodruff, and 'ow a mate as was the worse for drink did let out as she was brought over from the land of willians by one as is called 'Shifty Raff.'" And this human telegraphy of the past had kindly put him on his guard. In fact he had but just finished talking to one worthy pal when, looking down the street, he had seen a stranger who was evidently asking his way somewhere, and whose informant pointed in his—Rafferty's—direction. He waited to see what would happen, and was not surprised when the stranger advanced and spoke to him.

"Come in, come in," said Rafferty. The man thanked him, but refused, saying, "I have a note to give you from my master, Captain Van Leydan, and I must take the answer back immediately."

Rafferty, who could read, opened the note. It was brief, and its purport was that, requiring a capable second officer, the writer would be over that same afternoon to see Captain Rafferty, who might know of some one willing to undertake a short voyage to Holland. Rafferty read the note over twice, and then spoke—"Tell your master that I shall be in waiting for him, and that I am his man."

This short interview took place not later than nine in the morning. It was now quite four, and Rafferty felt that the moment, the great moment of his life, was at hand. He had made his plans, those of great captains or great diplomatists. The thought that these tactics required consummate skill to ensure success did not trouble him, for Rafferty felt confident both in his ability and in the ultimate realization of his wishes. "All or nothing," was his maxim; "if I can't get what I want, neither shall he."

So he sat as firm as a rock, and as innocent-looking as a baby. All was ready, for under the bed in his own bedroom, covered with an old sail or two, was a rough deal box. He had not opened it, its contents were nothing to him, but that they had an immense value as establishing the identity of the charming Princess he was certain. Rafferty knew about her loss of memory; he knew everything that went on at No. 4, Church

Street. Even when at the convict station he had regular information sent out to him, and if any one could have fathomed the peculiarities of his heart and conscience he would have been astonished at the real affection which the rough smuggler still retained for the only child who had ever responded to his somewhat uncouth advances. "Ain't such as we, my Princess!" But if he thought highly of his Princess, so he did of the Woodruffs, the Admiral, and Jack. "They were worth a jolly lot of darned monsieurs." And as these were the days of naval superiority, Rafferty thought that even a foreign princess could not complain if she had the luck to inspire affection in the heart of such as Jack. "Black-eyed Susan ain't nothing to her! Lor', she is a beauty though!"

The street was almost as quiet as the house, and while still meditating on the sovereign power of beauty, Rafferty heard steps approaching, the steps of a lame man, for a little halt could be distinguished, as though one foot remained on the ground longer than the other. As Rafferty knew his visitor to be lame this was conclusive. He leant back in his chair and threw his pocket-handkerchief over his eyes (a small hole was conveniently over one) and feigned slumber. The steps reached the house and then ceased, for the visitor, though he was, as we know, highly bred, was looking in, and the peaceful attitude of the proprietor did not escape notice, in fact a smile was to be seen on the observer's face. Captain Van Leydan stroked the cat, calling it as he did so by some Dutch terms of endearment. He then stepped down to the threshold and rapped at the open door.

With a start of surprise Rafferty arose as though still overcome with sleep, and standing in the passage said loudly, "Come in, mate, come in! What's your business?" but on completely awakening he with admirable presence of mind excused himself for so familiar a welcome, "as he had been took sudden like while napping."

With profuse politeness he ushered his visitor into the parlour and entreated him to be seated. He then

sat down opposite, and, like the wary combatants they were, they both took stock of one another, and they both came to the same conclusion. The skilled diplomatist's was this: "He's got his price and means to have it!" The smuggler's was: "He's about as crafty a cove as can be met—I'm his man though!" And then they began.

For one hour they talked about ships, and the post vacant on the one belonging to Van Leydan, for which Rafferty offered his own services. He did not hide the circumstances of his past life, or the cause of his imprisonment, matters thought very little of in those days by merchant captains, and Rafferty knew that his seamanship was beyond comment. Van Leydan acquiesced in all Rafferty said, and even hinted at past successes in a similar line.

Still nothing of interest had been talked of, and when the all-important topic did assert itself, it was Rafferty who had the glory of introducing the subject, for in narrating adventures he alluded to bringing over refugees from France. Van Leydan seemed interested, and after a few remarks said boldly, "Any of interest? Ladies or children?"

Said Rafferty, "I am told as you know who I brought over; a pal as was drunk told ye as I brought over from France that little gal of the Admiral's.—Well, I did!"

"And it does you honour, Captain Rafferty.—Honour. And may I ask if you were present when the Admiral received his little daughter?"

Rafferty stood up, winked at his companion, and crossing the room shut the window, and after that the door. The tussle was commencing, but Van Leydan did not mean to waste time; that he was to be bettered he knew, but at any cost he meant to get the proofs which he felt sure that the man before him possessed.

"Daughter! That little gal, Miss Kitty Woodruff, ain't no more the Admiral's daughter than you or I is, there! I ain't a-let out that much afore, I can tell you!"

"You perhaps know, Captain, whose daughter she is?"

"Well," said Rafferty, "and what would you say if I did?"

"Nothing," answered Van Leydan, "for you are one of those whom it would be difficult it deceive."

"That child is a princess, as I have reason to know."

Trained though he was, it was impossible for Van Leydan to suppress the look of surprise that flashed across his eyes. It was noticed by Rafferty, who saw that he had made a mistake. "Leastways, to us a princess. I ain't a-going to say as she was the king's daughter."

"I am told," said his opponent, "that when the poor child landed at Deal she was dressed almost as a beggar, and the manservant who accompanied her, as a sailor?"

"Right you are!" said Rafferty. "But you wasn't told any more, for no one knows any more but me, and, Lord love you, I don't know much. But what I know I'll find ways of showing you as will pretty plainly tell you and others who that little gal is."

"What do you want?" said Van Leydan.

"What do I want? Well, thieves is honest sometimes, and smugglers is better than thieves, and if I had been a thief I could have had what I want without the asking, but I ain't no thief. Well—I want a ship!"

"A ship!" ejaculated the now astonished Van Leydan. "A ship! Why you must indeed think Miss Woodruff the daughter of the King!"

"Yes," said Rafferty, "that she is some sort of a princess, I am sure. And now you know my price Well, we need not talk any more about it, or her. The child is well off where she is, I did my best for her. The Admiral is as good as a king any day, and—well—it ain't no business of yours!"

"I have a friend who is interested in that child," said Van Leydan, "and if the proofs you know of are conclusive he would, I dare say, accede to your wishes, or in any case further your interests. Would you consider the part ownership of the *George Washington*, my three-master, the vessel for which I have engaged your services as second officer, equal to the information you can give me?"

It had come! The day dream was to be a reality—he had only to hold firm! "Give me a moment," was all he said.

Van Leydan watched him curiously. That he was paying a heavy price he was aware, but he would have given more, all he had in the world, in fact, to have in his power the happiness of the man whose studied indifference had so embittered his life.

"Who is to be the other partner?" said Rafferty. "You?"

"Yes," said Van Leydan. "I am tired of ships, and the troubles associated with them, and I have gone into quite another line of business now."

"Something to do with the perlice, I should say," said Rafferty.

"Yes, something under Government."

"What am I to take as guarantee?" asked Raff.

"My word," answered Van Leydan, and he gave his victorious opponent a glance that took with it much of that worthy's self-esteem.

"I don't doubt you, master," was his tacit acknowledgment of the superiority of the vanquished.

Van Leydan took from his pocket a sheet of paper and taking a pen from Rafferty, wrote a formal letter in which he handed over to the master mariner, Silas Rafferty, the three-master known as the *George Washington*, on consideration of receiving part of the profits accruing from the cargo with which she would be freighted.

"This must be taken to some lawyer to be legal," was his only comment when the letter was finished. "I will return to-morrow evening. And now that I have satisfied you, will you kindly explain yourself, and show me the proofs you have in your possession," and Van Leydan looked again at his host.

"You've got your money's worth," said Rafferty. "Wait a bit," and he left the room.

The cat came in as he did so, and without more ado jumped upon Van Leydan's knee. She was purring at his caresses when her master returned, which he did shortly after, carrying the wooden box we know so well.

"A detainer of property is no thief?" said Van Leydan interrogatively.

"I ain't no detainer of property! I was asked to take charge of this 'ere box by the Frenchy as was with the little gal, and as I was nabbed the night we landed them, my pals took charge of this here box a-thinking of it mine. When ye've seen what's inside, you'll see all you want," and Rafferty commenced to uncord the box.

But he was considerably surprised at Van Leydan's refusing to allow him to proceed. "As you said some time ago, Captain Rafferty, some thieves are honest; so as your word is doubtless as much to be relied on as my own"—here the bow given was tremendous in the irony it expressed—"I will take the box and its contents as they are at present—unopened. May I trouble you to carry it to my carriage, which is waiting for me at the end of the street?"

Rafferty, meeker than he ever deemed it possible for him to be to any one, acquiesced, and walked behind his vanquished foe with the air, not of a conqueror, but as of one defeated.

After a delightful drive, that did much to soothe the Count's nerves, which from more than one cause had been much upset during the last two days, he returned to the *King's Arms*.

As he got out of the post-chaise he was welcomed by the whole of the party from No. 4, who were escorting Lady Hamilton to her rooms; and as the mysterious box was being lifted out it was seen by Jack, who, wishing to show the Dutchman his good fellowship, took it from the landlord and carried it upstairs and deposited it in the red room.

Kitty was introduced, and in her stately way charmed the diplomatist, though he remarked with surprise that if she resembled her mother in form and features, yet she was the Duc himself in voice and manner, so much that it almost took his sympathy from her as she recalled by varied expressions on her lovely face her father's personality. Shortly after, they left, and then Lady Hamilton began to narrate her adventures at the cherry

gardens, where Kitty had danced as no one else had ever danced before, and how she had the manners of a queen —or those a queen should have—and she joked a little at the expense of Royal Charlotte.

The Count listened impatiently to all these trivialities, but the longest day has an ending, consequently so has the weariest hour, and at last " good-nights " were said and the Count was free.

He retired at once to his room, and, dismissing his secretary, locked the door, and drawing the box from the corner where Jack had placed it, began to undo the cord so deftly knotted by poor Pierre. At last the box was opened. Yes ! Rafferty had not played him false ! Yes ! his suspicions were correct—it was no accidental likeness ! Kitty was no member of the de Vaux family to whom their name could not be given ! For the first thing the Count's eyes fell upon was Pierre's puce velvet coat with the arms of the de Verminoux embroidered upon the sleeves. He took it from the box carefully, reverently, and then—he never knew why—as the lace ruffles which ornamented the wrist bands touched his hands, he looked at them intently, and saw that they were blood-stained, and then he guessed with whose blood. He knelt beside the bed with his lips glued to those blood-stained ruffles. He was determined to keep them for ever ; they should never be returned to the Duc. He might have all the rest, but these were his by every right ! His !—for had he not found the daughter of the woman whose death-blood stained them ! Surely the grateful father could not grudge him some relic of the woman he loved !

He stood erect, and, holding the coat near the candles, looked to see if it had more stains upon it ; as he did so his fingers closed upon something evidently in the lining. He, too, was skilled in hiding, for during the French Revolution portable property was the only means by which the émigrés existed, consequently their dexterity in concealing it about their persons and in their garments was marvellous. The Count a moment after held in his hand the souvenir of his beloved Queen—Her Majesty's gift to her god-daughter. He knew that such an orna-

ment had been presented when " tout Paris " had assisted at the magnificent function of the baptism of the daughter of the Duc de Verminoux. He bowed reverently, as he would have done to the donor, and then pressed to his heart the medallion containing the royal martyr's hair.

He glanced only at the childish garments; they had comparatively no interest for him. He was the possessor of two treasures, two precious relics of two of the noblest and loveliest women of their time, a Queen and a Duchess, to whom fate had meted out the same tragic end ! " No, no, Fate—or the Supreme Ruler—has watched over Louise's child," thought the Count. " Marie, Marie—no, not Marie—Gabrielle Marie Antoinette ! I remember now. Gabrielle, the Queen said, should be her name, as she would always bring good tidings. Named after an angel and a Queen ! The Admiral must be right after all ! He accepted his religion without a scruple, without a doubt, while I——" and the ex-priest shuddered. Surely Louise's child had been under a special Providence, and he compared her happy existence with that of her little playmate, his rightful King, the outraged little victim of the Temple !

" Why take away faith ? " he cried at last, tossing back his hair in desperation. " Why take faith away ? No human punishment is adequate to that which the miscreants deserve who tortured that child ! " And then he envied the humblest peasant, the simplest and most confiding old woman, secure in his or her religion, looking confidently for a life beyond the grave in which all wrongs would be righted, all earthly miseries forgotten.

He laid the Fleur-de-Lis on the lace ruffles, and again thought of the Admiral and his convictions that the dead are not unaware of what is passing round those they love on earth, and he resolved to act as though he too believed that his Queen and the Duchess were watching with loving interest the train of circumstances which had resulted in the discovery of the lost child, and the part he—the despised Maurice de Talleyrand—had been given in the drama—one of reconciliation.

"How pleased Louise will be!" he thought. "For to the Duc will not only be restored a daughter, but he will at last understand her mother's friend.

"But what misery for the Woodruffs! This strong-headedness on the part of Pitt will keep us at war with England for years. Of course the First Consul will arrange that the girl can be restored to her father, but then poor Woodruff will see nothing of his darling, and Jack——. However, I can only do my best! Directly I return to Paris I will write to de Verminoux and inform him of my discovery, and the whereabouts of his lost child, and as a proof of her identity I will enclose Her Majesty's gift."

The next morning, before Romney was completely dressed he heard a gentle rap at his door. On opening it, he was confronted by the Count, of whose identity he was aware. The visitor before speaking put his fingers to his lips as though to demand silence, and entered. On the door being closed, Count Talleyrand, after due apologies, explained the purport of his visit.

"You are on the point of painting the portrait of Miss Woodruff," said he. "For reasons which I cannot now fully explain, but which I am sure you will approve when I have the honour of giving you the information that I am now compelled to withhold, I am anxious to present the Admiral with a handsome souvenir, and as we all know that nothing would please him so much as the portrait of his beloved niece, I have ventured to pay you this visit to ask you to honour me by accepting the commission. I should like her representation to be nearly life-size, and treated as you originally intended—though a portrait—as a picture. Consequently, may I ask you to carry out your first idea, which was, I believe, to paint Miss Woodruff in the character of Psyche. These are such stormy times," he added, "that I do not hesitate to take advantage of our interview to offer you what I consider but a small acknowledgment of your genius," and he handed Romney a roll of English bank-notes. Closing his eyes in the manner peculiar to him when engaged in delicate or difficult matters, he again addressed the astonished artist. "Do not thank me!

So highly do I appreciate your skill that should you demur at the trifling remuneration I offer you I shall consider that by so doing you condemn my judgment as an amateur of art. Inspired as I see you, I do not doubt but that the picture will be worthy of you, and in all probability your masterpiece. I will write this, if I may, here," he added. "As you know, there is no chance of peace; so the prospect of seeing my English friends again is very vague. Will you have this placed where you think best when you have your picture framed?" and the Count, standing by the table, wrote:—

"From Charles Maurice de Talleyrand to John Woodruff, the man he deems it an honour to call his friend," and before Romney could collect his thoughts the Count had bowed himself out of the room.

The morning was unusually fine, and seeing that it would be some time before his companions would be ready for breakfast, the Count determined to take a short walk to the cliffs. Taking his hat from his secretary, he proceeded to walk up Church Street, and on reaching the Churchyard gate was about to pass through it when he heard his assumed name called in so loud a tone that it was impossible to feign either indifference or deafness; so, though vexed at his meditations being interrupted, he turned, as though delighted, and faced the Admiral who, hatless, was crossing the street to meet him.

"The very man I wanted!" was that worthy's salutation. "Her ladyship says that you are leaving us this afternoon, and to think that you have never crossed my doorstep! It's a blot on the hospitality of the Woodruffs! I shall take it as an insult, sir, if you do not do Mrs. Woodruff the honour of breakfasting with us on this your last morning in Folkestone. No refusals, for I should take them ill!" and here the Admiral looked into the blue-black eyes that were now more than ever narrowed by the peculiar drooping of their owner's eyelids, "for I am drawn to you, sir, by some sympathetic influence, and I feel that you understand me, though I cannot say that I do you! Come in, come in!"

At that moment a manservant passed the door "Sinclair!" cried the Admiral. "Go to the *King's Arms*,

and say that I am keeping the Captain to breakfast, and that I shall be round shortly after ten."

The two gentlemen entered the house, and the Count was impressed by its air of affluent comfort. Mrs. Woodruff, handsome and smiling, welcomed the visitor in the hall, and together they went into the dining-room, where she initiated Van Leydan into the art of making tea. Jack shortly after joined the party, and on Sinclair's bringing in the breakfast dishes they proceeded to take their places, when Van Leydan was surprised to see the door thrown open, and Miss Woodruff announced by the servant who had so astonished him with his French manners on the day of his arrival. The Admiral was on his feet in an instant and embraced "his Kitty." Van Leydan watched Jack as he did so, and did not fail to see two dark blue eyes look past the Admiral in his, Jack's, direction. He smiled inwardly, and his reflections were doubtless as old as the hills—"Even if innocent, all women are born coquettes, and the girl intuitively knows that the kisses she showers upon her uncle are envied by her so-called cousin."

Kitty sat at the Admiral's right hand, facing Mrs. Woodruff; Van Leydan opposite Jack. Collins remained behind his mistress' chair during the meal—"treated like a princess!" thought the visitor, "and how loved!"

Before breakfast was over, he, too, had joined in the universal homage paid the unspoilt darling of the house, for Kitty bewildered him with her wit and ready tact, and that art of acquiescence learnt only by those who are trained among courtiers. Van Leydan felt, as he looked and listened, proud of his nationality and the ties of friendship which united him with the girl's family.

"Your niece does not speak any foreign language, madam?" said he at last in an undertone to his hostess.

Mrs. Woodruff answered in a low voice, "No! I will tell you why after breakfast."

The young people volunteered to show the Dutchman the garden, and Kitty entreated him to send her some bulbs from Holland, "if the *George Washington* did not get taken by the monsieurs."

"Do not tell me, my dear young lady, that you, who would conquer the hearts of all Frenchman, and the First Consul among them, dislike the brave enemies of your country!"

"Kitty is sorry for them," retorted Jack. "Aided by Mrs. Collins, she is always making little presents for the French prisoners. At first she went to see them with mother, but she cried off and on for two days after!"

"I don't know why I cried," said Kitty, "but I did. I seemed to know them and they seemed to know me, but it's only nonsense after all! They make me far better things than I help Mrs. Collins to make for them —baskets, mats, carved woodwork—my old nursery is full of their gifts. Mother sends them cakes, and"—here Kitty looked full of mischief—"father lets me empty his pockets when I feel inclined. I tell him the day before, so that he may have something in them!"

"She has only boarded me once, Captain! The rogue took me prisoner in the garden. She is a pirate, and has tampered with the good faith of an honest naval officer and gentleman—my son. Called out 'No quarter, no prisoners, I want the loot!'—and before I could say 'Bless me! Hold hard!' I was minus five guineas! And then when released I attempted retaliation, protected by a swifter frigate she escaped, and there was I with no wind in my sails! Oh, she is a sly puss! No monsieurs about here, Van Leydan! Of course they would be bound to admire my Kitty, but I think the old three-decker would not be without support in keeping them at a convenient distance. What do you say, Jack? Collins! bring me a glass of Geneva, I will drink their health though. Van Leydan! Jack!" bowing to each in turn. "Our late enemies, the bravest of the brave! Sir, if I have a grudge against them I do not underrate their valour!"

On leaving the table, Van Leydan was taken into the garden. After inspecting it the delighted Frenchman was shown the house from top to bottom—"One of the happiest homes in the Land of Homes!" was his remark on joining its burly owner.

The Admiral grasped the speaker by the hand and

answered, "Now, now, you are right! You know, or guess, how I love my wife? Well," he whispered, "for one year I dreaded my home, I dreaded returning even to her. That was the year after the loss of my own child. Have you ever lost a child? No? Then you can never understand. I had to nerve myself to cross the threshold of my own home. I came back, sir, a broken-hearted man, to find—what? A party in this house, sir! And a child named Kitty, dressed in my own child's clothes, dancing, man, like a queen in the drawing-room, and her manservant playing the fiddle! For five minutes I was wild at the forgetfulness of my wife and boy, but she, the little stranger, rushed to my arms, taking me for my brother, but I pushed her aside. It was Jack, my boy, who told me—'Father,' he said, 'it's Kitty, uncle's Kitty, and she is crying!' From that moment, sir, that child has been my little comforter, the Kitty sent to compensate us for our loss. It's been mutual, we replace her parents, she, our child. If this Kitty—this Kitty who came to us, as Mrs. Woodruff says, from the skies—were to be reclaimed as her little namesake was!—I—I—I can't speak of it!—that's all. She's my first thought in the morning, and my last at night!" and heated and excited by this long oration, the Admiral sank into a chair.

His confidant looked down upon him in perfect anguish. He felt himself a serpent in a new Eden. Later on, surrounded by his English friends, he got into the post-chaise which was to take him to Deal, and it was the Admiral's hand he held the last, tenaciously grasping it: "You say that I understand you but that you cannot make me out—you will perhaps some day! I thank God that I can say I have met one honest man!"

And then the carriage started. It might have been the wind—it may have been the dust—but the Count's eyes seemed to water, for he brushed his hands across them.

Having completed his business in Deal to the satisfaction of Rafferty, he was rowed by that worthy and his pals to the *George Washington*, and, sailing under Dutch colours, crossed the Channel in the direction of

Dunkirk. A sailing-boat lying off the coast approached the merchantman, and the Count and his secretary were shortly transferred to her, the only visible sign of their having been ashore anywhere being a trifling addition to their luggage in the shape of a rough wooden box.

CHAPTER XVII

JACK AND KITTY

Oh, bloom of young desire, oh, purple light of love!
Gray.

LADY HAMILTON left Folkestone a day or two after her illustrious guest. Until the last moment of her visit she was in constant communication with the Woodruff family, and when she returned to London she was escorted by Jack, who was deputed by Admiral Lord Nelson to look after her welfare. The good-natured woman smiled at the tragic manner in which her knight received the jovial message sent him by his friend and commander, for she knew full well that Jack's advances in the path of true love were not unobstructed, or free from the thorns of doubt, mistrust of his own powers of pleasing, natural timidity, and abject cowardice at even the prospect of a frown from the object of his adoration. Admiral Woodruff was delighted at the situation, and did what he thought best to encourage, and, as might be expected, made—as Collins graphically expressed it—" a bad job worse ! "

For if Jack was as poor a lover as one could meet in a day's march, Kitty might have been trained by Venus herself. Romney was delighted at the natural coquetry of the beautiful girl whom he had named Psyche—" Psyche, indeed ! She is not one who would ever plead before Venus. She is as much Psyche as the handsome lad is Eros ! No, Emma, in winning hearts she has nothing to learn, she is a born enslaver. Look at her now ! "

Kitty was standing in the garden, by the fountain ; Jack was not far off, but he might have been a thousand miles away, so unconscious of his presence was the lady

of his heart, who was singing to "Father" as he looked out of his bedroom window. When the song was over Jack advanced, evidently in doubt, and said loud enough for the listeners to hear, "I am going away to-morrow, Kitty; Lord Nelson wishes me to conduct Lady Hamilton to London."

"Will you come back again, Jack? or join your ship?"

Join his ship! "How little she cares for me, it's all 'Father,'" thought the distracted lover. "I shall only be away a week; I have to stay a week," stammered the hero of Aboukir Bay, "for Mr. Lawrence will want four sittings for my portrait, you know—I did tell you, did I not, that he is painting it?"

"I dare say," said Kitty, "that you will stay longer, for I see" (oh, cruel Kitty!) "that you find Folkestone dull." And with elegant ease she sauntered into the house, leaving Jack inclined to tear his hair. He wisely resolved not to impair his personal appearance, and joined Lady Hamilton and Romney in the summer-house.

Kitty in the meantime had retired to her room, and cried, what for, she did not know. On drying her eyes, she too looked out of the window, and saw that "Father" had joined the party in the garden, so she resolved to go and hear what they were all laughing at. And she was so bright and merry that what lover would or could have imagined that the thought of his absence for a week had caused tears—not humble-minded Jack? He did offer one of the China roses, and on its being accepted hoped again, and resolved on his return to try quite a novel way of wooing.

But his farewell was so callously received, that Lady Hamilton's escort was far from an agreeable one; in fact, on joining Lord Nelson (who was immediately given a hasty but brilliant sketch of the position of affairs), she compared our Jack to "a mute at a funeral. It was dreadful!"

"I must give him a hint or two," cried Nelson. "He should think he's at sea."

"That is just where he is!" said Lady Hamilton,

" and I am sure I don't know when he will land—Kitty will have to land him ! "

" Dear Emma, you surely must know what a sailor's like when he is in love ? "

" No," was the answer, " I don't ! But I do know what a man is ! " And Nelson thought Lady Hamilton hard on Jack.

So it was while in this tragic state of mind that Jack daily visited Mr. Lawrence, who, unaware of the cause of his despair (at which he would have smiled), wondered greatly at his handsome sitter's melancholy, at the same time doing his best to portray it ; and the great artist's strong point being, as we know, the exquisite refinement of his portraits, Jack was a model quite to his taste, and the outcome of the four sittings was a *chef d'œuvre.* Jack, with dark blue eyes and waving chestnut hair, slender, but broad-shouldered, in his uniform, and holding in his right hand the flag he had captured, and with that expression of romantic despair, it was no wonder, when Mr. Lawrence invited the " beau-monde " to a private view at his studio, that the ladies one and all voted Lieutenant Woodruff " a perfect duck," and worried Lord Nelson to death with questions as to the why and the wherefore of that expression. Invitations, too, were sent to the woebegone youth, and one or two fair dames with poetical aspirations wrote sonnets in which they not only poured forth their admiration, but volunteered to console the " Pilgrim of Love."

But long before this Jack had fled from the metropolis and, laden with offerings for his adored one, was again *en route* for Folkestone. Naturally he did the journey without other delays than those caused by the necessary changing of horses. Ten hours in a post-chaise were nothing to a lover who would fain have flown. He left London at 10 p.m. Foot-pads, highwaymen, what were they to a sailor ? As he got into the post-chaise and pushed his valise under the seat, Mr. Lawrence would hardly have known him ; in fact, he would have been uneasy about his portrait. For it was no woebegone lover who put his case of pistols carefully into the carriage, and then took his seat by

their side. No! the look on Jack's face then was: "Come on! You will find your match, or more!"

The roads were bad, though it was summer, and a horse fell lame, otherwise the journey was uneventful. Owing to these interruptions our hero did not reach Folkestone until 11 a.m. the next day. He did not wait a moment at the *King's Arms*, but walked impatiently to No. 4.

The door was open, so he entered his home unannounced. "I shall take them all by surprise," thought he. But no! somebody was there! Could she have been watching? Somebody was there, with cheeks pink with pleasure! Somebody who had forgotten that she was a grown-up young lady, and said, "Dear Jack! Oh, Jack!" And he had been able to kiss her and then present his gifts, and they too, had been not only received, but delighted in. What might have happened then no one knows, but just as Jack's sky was clear and winds were most propitious, who should take the wind out of his sails but that old three-decker "Father," and the prize was gone. Yes, though delightful and gentle, it was "Father" again! And our lover would have vowed vengeance on his rival had he been any one else but "Father."

The Admiral, "dear old marplot," was overjoyed at seeing his boy again, and with him on one arm and his Kitty on the other he led them through the dining-room into the garden, where Mrs. Woodruff was sitting with Romney, who was painting as though each moment was precious to him. Here Jack was again made welcome, and he expressed such unbounded admiration for the portrait already growing under the magic brush of that artist *par excellence* of female charms, and in such just terms did he show his appreciation, that Romney, backing, and then giving side glances, as artists will do when criticising their own work, thereupon vowed to aid him to the best of his ability. "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-gley," and in a multitude of counsellors there may be wisdom, as well as a variety of opinions, but occasionally the advice they give, however well meant, fails, as our hero only too

soon found out; for in his forlorn state a confidant was a necessity, and the sympathetic artist was, ere many days, the kindly recipient of all Jack's hopes and fears.

Now, in Jack's absence, he had remarked in his model a lassitude almost amounting to indifference when she felt herself unwatched, and then the expression so admired by her observer became so vague and "far away" that, unnoticed, Romney was able to take many a sly sketch which he found most useful later on when that ethereal look had fled for ever. Consequently he considered that all Jack had to do was to "come to the point."

"Don't be shy, my dear boy. They like it—girls are all alike! Why, you ridiculous fellow, she loves you I tell you!" This was in answer to some hesitation on Jack's part. "Father! indeed! of course she is his pet! How are you to do it?—Well I never!" and Romney backed as though before an easel and looked Jack down from top to toe. "Fond of poetry, is she? Ah! that is all right. Look your best—hair a little rough. Talk of general subjects, of how quickly the time passes, and how soon it will be time for you to be afloat again! Talk of the war, and of its dangers, and then of what you think of aboard ship. Then look, my boy, and press her hand, and whisper, 'For nothing this wide universe I call, Save thou, my rose, in it thou art my all!' Then—but surely I need not tell you more! Let your heart speak!"

"And you feel certain that she does love me?" said our hero.

"Why of course. Now if you are not as happy as a king to-morrow, my name is not George Romney."

And that evening the greatest harmony reigned at No. 4. Jack, confident and happy, sang bright cheerful songs to please his father, and did not, as usual, pour out plaintive reproaches to unkind Chloes. He did, however, sing one love song:

I dare not ask a kiss,
I dare not beg a smile;
Lest, having that or this,
I might grow proud the while.

No, no, the utmost share
Of my desire shall be,
Only to kiss that air
That lately kissèd thee.

As he sang he gave one look at his adviser, who was listening complacently, and received a quiet wink of approbation from him. Thus emboldened, he looked hard at Kitty, who blushed divinely, and Jack felt that Romney was right, and that it should be "death or glory."

The moon was shining so beautifully, and the soft summer air so laden with the fragrance of the roses, that Jack suggested a walk in the garden. Mr. Pim had dined with the Admiral, so after the music was over he made a fourth at whist. This was most opportune for Jack, who gallantly led the lady of his heart round the garden. He picked her a bunch of roses from her favourite bush, and then, without a doubt as to his success, entered the summer-house. And there he wooed, and quoted his Shakespeare with the most disastrous results, for Kitty, seemingly frightened, rushed from his detaining arms and fled to her bedroom, it is true to wonder why she had been so silly as to run away, but leaving her lover in despair. But if Jack was in despair, Kitty was triumphant. Jack did love her; people did get married, "why should we not get married, Jack and I?" She never could be happy without him she knew.

When Romney, who was now a guest at No. 4, retired for the night, having worsted the Admiral and Mr. Pim of more than half a guinea, he found his room occupied by his pupil, who, far from upbraiding him or underrating his advice, deplored his own indifferent manner of carrying it out.

"What am I to do now?" he gasped.

"Take another line of action; pay attention to some other girl—Miss Slateman, she is not ill looking. Go there of an evening. What about a boat—is she a good sailor? Go to London for a week."

So when Jack appeared at breakfast the next morning, instead of giving a sly look at his lady-love (whose eyes

would have told him all he wished) he started his new tactics, and announced his intention of going to London or to Ashford—and off he went, to his mother's intense astonishment.

Evidently he did not get beyond Ashford, for he was back before the week was out, and the very night of his return went to a card party at the Slateman's, and the next morning during breakfast said, "What a pretty girl Sally Slateman has grown!"

And father, "dear old father," was obliged to make matters worse by saying, "That she is! I only wish that I was young enough to be her sweetheart."

Kitty looked from one to the other bewildered by these desertions. "Sally Slateman! Oh, Jack! Well, he shall never know that I love him."

And so matters went from bad to worse. Jack lost flesh; indignation kept up Kitty, who at the expiration of two days realized that she "need fear no foe." Mrs. Woodruff was alarmed, and worried her brains to find out whether any member of her family had died in a decline. Miss Grainger was consulted, and terrible concoctions were made for the invalid by the two ladies. Romney and the Admiral smiled inwardly. Dr. Slateman, when consulted by the anxious mother, answered warily, "That time, in these cases, worked wonders." Books were searched for possible "old-fashioned remedies," for even in 1800 the old times were voted the most sensible. But when on the discovery of an unfailing cure—"Snails to be eaten before breakfast,"—the invalid kicked over the traces, and refused to be poisoned, though his mother, with tears in her eyes, said "that she had been told that they (the snails) were very like Whitstable oysters," Kitty shuddered, but said nothing, and Jack looked at her defiantly.

One glorious August morning the Admiral, with his dressing-room window wide open, and singing a warlike challenge to an imaginary enemy, was interrupted in his song by the entrance of his wife, who looked fondly at the singer. "Want anything, Bessie? I am all right—Sinclair, you can go now. And what, my dear, can I do for you?"

"I have only come in, dear, to chat to you about Jack. You do not seem anxious, and you know that I am—can it be anything in the family?"

"Yes!" roared the Admiral, "it is something in the family; three-and-twenty years ago, my dear—why, I was worse. I can't remember what I looked like though—but I've got over it. Nothing wrong here now!" and the Admiral gave three resounding raps on the wide expanse of his shirt front. "Nothing like consumption—no decline, is it?" (satirically) "no hectic flush here?"—and he unblushingly presented a bronzed cheek for his wife to salute. "You have a bad memory, that is all, dear. Why, I went through all he is going through, poor fellow, when I courted you! But I was never so romantic, and I did not go in for the same style of songs. I had more dash and go, and you were not such a sly minx as our darling! Don't worry, it will all come right. I wonder that you and Judith have not killed him before now with your slops. Leave him alone, Bessie, and think of what my poor mother went through! I believe, Bessie, your boy is jealous of me—me!—his father! Oh! Bessie, he may be a good sailor, but he is the poorest lover I have ever seen! You have no reason to complain. Do you remember——" and the exuberant Admiral would have recounted many a tender episode. But the voices of the young people were heard in the garden, and, after giving his wife another kiss, who as she aided him on with his coat entreated him "to take more exercise, you get stouter every day, John!" he said, "I am glad of it, my dear, none of your snails for me!" And he put his arm around "his Bessie's" waist and led her downstairs.

Romney did not require his sitter's presence that morning, "Psyche's" face being nearly finished; he was only working at details, assisted of course by his pupil. Kitty was nowhere to be seen or heard—father did not know—mother wondered where she could be, but knew that she was safe, for Collins was absent too. "What a pity, Jack, you did not join them!" Jack gave his mother such a look that she was obliged

to kiss him and whisper, "I know she loves you, don't fret."

So he resigned himself to solitude, and, sitting in the garden, read Hamlet. Half an hour before dinner he heard Kitty's voice, clear, musical, and evidently joyous. At dinner he was surprised to find her looking the picture of contented bliss. Her blue eyes flashed with delight; she smiled on him—yes! on him—as he never could have believed she would ever do again after his abominable advances in the summer-house. From the depths of woe he found himself on a pinnacle of happiness.

"Where have you been, my darling?" said the Admiral.

"Only a walk, father, through the Broadmead meadows; the gipsies are there."

"I believe you have had your fortune told, you sly puss! Now tell me all about it, though I could have told it as well as any gipsy. Shall I tell it you now? You are a trim little craft that does her best to worry King George's navy. You are a pirate, miss, and will some day be brought into harbour with a tow-line. Do you hear, miss! Don't look so sly, and kiss your poor old father!"

And Kitty, nothing loth, kissed the Admiral in the way he liked best—that was for his darling to lay her cool soft cheek on his for a minute or two, and then to rush away, calling, "Catch me if you can!" In and out among the shrubs and side-walks, round the fountain, Kitty ran! Ah! for the good old times when Jack was his father's trusted ally! No help could be expected from him under existing circumstances, so the prize escaped, not in the least tired, either from her morning walk or the romp with father.

It was quite true that Kitty had had her fortune told, for passing over a little bridge connecting one meadow with another she was accosted by an old woman, who looked at her strangely and said—"Pride of Folkestone, let me tell your fortune."

"Be careful!" said Collins.

"I know," said the woman, and refusing the silver

handed her by Collins, she took Kitty's hand and read it carefully, from time to time giving sharp looks into her face. At last she spoke: "You are very happy, and will be, for you will marry the man you love, though there are others who love you, and have loved you all your life. Your throne will be in your own home, though you might have been the queen of the Snow land."

Said Kitty, "Tell me something more. Will my husband be safe in battle and come home to me when the horrid wars are over?"

The woman looked again into her hand, and looking at Collins, said—"Yes! He will often be wounded, but he will recover from his wounds; another will give his life for him. And your other lover, the one who would have given you a crown, he too will aid him. The man you love will die in his bed."

So it was no wonder that Kitty fairly danced home. Yes, she would marry Jack! How foolish he was when she never meant to say "no"—why she only ran away because she was so frightened. Jack was a silly—she would have to tell him that she did not mean to be unkind. Why should he be so strange?

The front door banged. On went Kitty's hat, she was downstairs and in the pantry before many minutes had passed.

"Collins, was that Mr. Jack?"

"Yes, miss."

"Come, we will join him." And Collins, nothing loth, got his hat.

They looked round them on starting to see if Jack was in sight. He was not, but Collins felt sure that he had gone "the same way as we did this morning, miss." So they followed, Kitty talking gaily all the time, for Collins was fourth in her heart as she was first in his. Perfectly happy they strolled through the meadows which were fragrant with wild thyme. Occasionally they caught sight of Jack. Then rude angry voices could be distinctly heard, and the whining of a puppy, and, soon after, angry shouts.

"We will go back, miss. It's them gipsy chaps

a-fighting among themselves. Master Jack? Why they won't dare put a finger on him!"

"I shall not leave my cousin in danger, Collins," said his mistress, and with all the blood of the de Verminoux' boiling in her veins, Kitty darted over another plank bridge, and saw in the distance a group of men evidently fighting. Regardless of Collins' "Bide a bit, miss, I'll see about it," and keeping a head or two in advance of him, she ran in the direction of the fray. She saw Jack's blue coat amid the struggling mass; that was enough, she was there among the men—tall, slender, white like a lily, but with flashing eyes. The men stopped as if by magic. "I will kill you all!" cried Kitty, "be off!"

And the gipsies fled, leaving Jack alone, and a small half-drowned puppy lying on the bank of the dyke. Jack staggered; blood was flowing from somewhere; he gave another totter, and Collins laid him on the ground.

And Kitty, the valorous Amazon of a minute before, bent over him crying—"Jack, my darling Jack, don't die, for I love you!" Here our hero closed his eyes in a beatitude of bliss. "Yes, Jack, I was silly; I should not have run away when you quoted such beautiful poetry in the summer-house. I was not angry—I was pleased. Oh, Jack, do speak to me and say that you forgive me!"

"Forgive you, Kitty!" said our hero (blessing Romney in his heart). "Why, I have nothing to forgive. And I am not going to die, darling, it's only my nose bleeding—so don't mind!"

Aided by Collins and the devoted Kitty, whose white dress was stained with the blood of her lover, Jack soon recovered, and told Kitty the cause of the row.

"This little dog, darling, it shall be ours, the first thing we share together. Why, the brutes were drowning it, and had been amusing themselves for half an hour or more watching its struggles, letting it get out and then throwing it back again to see how long it would last. What do you think of that? Rub it with dry grass, Collins." And they all devoted their attentions

to the brown spaniel puppy, who whined and crouched at their feet.

What a walk home that was! Oh! balmy summer breezes, did you ever play round such another pair of lovers? Did you ever whisper more tender congratulations than on that August afternoon? For you prophesied; oh, wind!—you told the hills that nature always spoke the truth, and that youth loved youth, that beauty loved beauty, and that love, and love alone, could ensure such happiness as those two children of delight would enjoy! "They are immortal lovers," whispered the wind, "for as heart with heart, hand in hand, they will walk through life together, so will they love for ever in the Heaven that will one day be their home!"

And Collins thought of Sinclair, who had been "nasty" over it. What would he say when he, Collins, said, "What did I tell you, mate? Master Jack's brought home his prize with a tow-line! Hurrah!"

They were all four, for the puppy (already named Ponto) was one of the party, so wrapped up in one another that they did not notice a flutter of excitement in the town, and quite unconcerned, reached Church Street.

The door of No. 4 was wide open, and several old pensioners were hanging about the churchyard. Jack, flushed with victory, with Kitty on his arm, entered his home to find a visitor, who came forward to welcome him. A short slender man, a naval officer too, with a star like father's on his valorous breast, and eyes that told their own story.

"Lord Nelson! Kitty, this is the hero of England! This is the bravest of the brave!"

How Jack might have continued I cannot say, for Lord Nelson interrupted him with—"And who's this, Jack, who is this?"

"My cousin," gasped our hero. "No, not my cousin, Admiral—my future wife!"

Then there was a scene. Nelson was the first to congratulate Kitty, amazed both at her beauty and manners. He swore, if living, to come to the wedding

and to give the bride away, and that he would present her wedding dress too. And "Father," why he cried in the pantry—but not with jealousy.

That afternoon as the Comte de Talleyrand sat in his cabinet a small packet was handed him. He looked at it over and over again in his astonishment, and his colour heightened as he looked; for under the address—"To Louis, duc de Verminoux, from Charles Maurice de Périgord de Talleyrand"—written in strong firm characters were these words:

"Louis de Verminoux has not the pleasure of the acquaintance of Charles Maurice de Périgord de Talleyrand."

CHAPTER XVIII

AN EVENING AT THE HOTEL D'ESPARDA

Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered.
—*Shakespeare.*

MADAME DE LA BOUCHARDIE sat in her drawing-room evidently expecting guests, for two white and gold chairs were placed on either side of the red velvet fauteuil she occupied. The windows were wide open, for the day had been sultry; with evening, however, a refreshing breeze had sprung up. It caused the leaves of the plantain trees in the court-yard to rustle as though grateful for its caresses; it wafted the delicious odour of the freshly watered garden into the room, and fluttered the lace curtains as though invisible hands were arranging and re-arranging their graceful folds. In the distance the peaceful hum of the great city could be heard, and Madame de la Bouchardie shuddered as she listened—shuddered and smiled. The smile was for the happy present, the shudder was for the past. It was an anniversary, an anniversary of a dire and tragic episode in history, for it was the 10th of August, and only eight years previously the gallant Swiss had earned themselves immortality as the most heroic mercenaries the world had ever known.

"Only eight years ago," she murmured, "and what changes!" And she thought of many who had perished on that awful day, among others of the Duchesse de Verminoux. "Poor woman! I wonder if I dare mention her to the Comte to-night? He once told me that I reminded him of her; it must be in expression only, for she was so beautiful," and the charming woman

leant back in her chair and reflected on the innocence of many of the martyrs in that whirlwind of revenge known as the great Revolution.

She had been one of those that the tide of reorganization had carried many degrees higher in the social scale than their birth merited. A friend of General Bonaparte's, she had won his heart, and though Madame de la Bouchardie was never ranked as one of the intellectual women of her day, she was far-sighted, and her well-known answer to his offer of marriage proves that she recognized the mighty genius that was to startle Europe and crown France with glory: "No, General! You will advance too far for one like myself, who loves to remain stationary."

But perhaps the cause of that far-sightedness was that she did not love the modern Caesar, otherwise she might not have been so prudent. She inspired all men with admiration, and many with love. And with what weapons, many may ask, did Eugénie de la Bouchardie achieve her victories? Beauty, wit, accomplishments? No! others more beautiful than she failed where she conquered; the most brilliant woman of her day, her friend, Madame de Staël, sighed in vain: though she excelled in accomplishments, she did not require their aid. No! her transcendent charm was "powerful weakness," and it is the rarest as well as the most dangerous of all female charms.

The evening on which we make her acquaintance she was expecting four guests—Madame de Staël, Joseph Chénier, Talma the actor, and the Comte de Talleyrand.

The sound of footsteps roused her from her melancholy reverie, and she advanced smiling to welcome her guests; for Madame de Staël was accompanied by two of the gentlemen before named.

"The Comte has not arrived yet, dear Eugénie? Ah! we will not regret his absence, for while awaiting him for the serious conversation of the evening we will chat a little at his expense," and Madame de Staël looked at her escort as though demanding their approval. "Do not fear that I shall traduce the absent, far from it; contrary to all precedent I shall praise him. Dear,"

addressing her hostess, "have you seen our 'proscrit' since his return from England? You have been from Paris?"

"Yes," answered Madame de la Bouchardie, "and happy." As she said this she looked at Chénier, who bowed with devotion.

"Then I must tell you he has returned triumphant as a conqueror, but his title, could the First Consul give him one, will not be 'the Prince of Peace,' for his mission, I have it on the best authority, was a failure. Can we have reason to deplore his loss? Oh! Eugénie, and I did think you, even at a distance, invincible!" Turning to the gentlemen, "Tell me, have you seen this Aphrodite—this enslaver of Neptune's favourite son, the invincible Nelson? Yes, gentlemen, though a Frenchwoman, I will not recall my adjective—invincible, he has been, and will be!"

"I have had that pleasure," answered Talma.

"And what——" but before Madame de Staël could finish her sentence the valet de chambre announced, "Monsieur le Comte de Talleyrand."

The Comte bowed to the assembled company, and, bending over his hostess' hand, murmured, "I have come to you for consolation." And then in a louder tone, "Yes, madame, you who represent Athena," (to Madame de Staël) "accompanied as I see you by ambassadors of two of the muses, Melpomene and Polyhymnia, can surely find some excuses for my want of success."

"We are only too glad to welcome you among us once more, Comte. Success being your usual companion, we do not ask to be introduced to such a chance acquaintance as defeat, for we feel sure we shall never meet him again in your company."

The Comte bowed again, saying, "Athena is always ready with some brilliant consolation!" As he uttered the adjective "brilliant," his eyes, semi-closed, looked coldly upon the lady he addressed, for, though bound by a debt of gratitude to Madame de Staël, he did not like her any more than the First Consul did, for the latter doubtless remembered the time when Necker's

talented daughter looked coldly and indifferently on the young officer whose father was but an obscure doctor in an out of the way island.

But the hostess now advanced, and taking her lady friend by the hand led her to the fauteuil, saying, "The Comte has given you your title for this evening at least, so I enthrone you!" In answer to remonstrances from Madame de Staël, "I insist!" And taking her seat on the right hand of her guest, she motioned the three gentlemen to take their places.

"Dear madame," said Chénier, "when we entered you were in a deep reverie, and you looked sad; permit us as friends to ask the cause of your sorrow, at the same time permission to share it with you."

"You are too kind," answered the charming Eugénie. "But I share your grief, my friend, for I do not ask you, do you remember what anniversary this is? And I was thinking of those who perished only eight years ago, and the many changes France has witnessed since then. Do you think, Comte, that they have brought much happiness with them?"

The Comte shrugged his shoulders, and said, "With many benefits we have to face (and those who come after us will realize what I am about to prophesy) a prevailing discontent; for I feel assured that one of the results of our Revolution will be that universal mankind will be discontented with its lot, and from the peasant to the noble will ask—why! ridiculous, is it not?—but they will even ask to be happy," here he laughed ironically, "happy! Poor fools! Too much introspection is a mistake. For too much sensibility creates unhappiness, as too much insensibility creates crimes."

"Let us shun politics," said Madame de Staël; "they are too dangerous," bowing to Chénier and Talma. "We demand 'Des lois et non du sang.' You will recall the past, gentlemen. Ah! Talma, no soldier on the field of battle so braved death as you did when you recited that hemistich."

"Yes," he answered, "it was rash, but Paris has always loved her actors. You, too," he turned to Chénier, "were born under a lucky star. I am think-

ing of your brother. Poor France is all the poorer for his murder; had the powers that were spared him he would have crowned his country with yet another myrtle crown; as it is he is immortal! How little he realized that! You remember his last words?" And with pathetic majesty the great actor recited them, and gave force to his recitation by acting as the lamented André: "Je n'ai rien fait pour la postérité" (here he struck his forehead), "pourtant j'avais quelque chose là."

"Yes," answered Joseph Chénier, "posterity will realize that it was a victim to our political revolution that revolutionized our poetical style. We all mourn dear friends, our martyrs, be they of our families or those dear by the ties of friendship. Though with seeming elasticity we have rebounded to the same tranquillity as enjoyed before the great upheaval."

"It will never be quite the same," said the Comte, "never!" And he elevated his voice, "But some day France will regret."

"Regret?" said Chénier. "Not a return to despotism?"

"No!" was the answer. "Times have changed, so will the nation have changed its tyrant; if formerly it was the King and his ministers, it may be in the future the unlettered masses and their puppets. I do not allude to the immediate future, but we will say, for the sake of lucidity, a hundred years hence."

Madame de la Bouchardie bent forward, smiling gently. "Peace, peace! No politics! Just as you were entering the room M. Talma was on the point of telling us his opinion of the lady with whom you have been staying."

The Comte looked at M. Talma. "Indeed, have you the privilege of her acquaintance?"

"Privilege!" cried Madame de Staël. "Why, she was a ci-devant maidservant, a grocer's maid of all work!"

Talma bowed with diffidence to the haughty daughter of the Genevese banker, and said, "That may be true, but all those drawbacks which without superlative

talents must have left her (even with her beauty) in a modest position, only accentuate her really marvellous ability. Can you realize that she is a superb actress, one who would create any rôle ! "

But the Comte, who, with semi-closed eyes, was preparing a poisoned arrow, and only awaiting the most favourable moment for its discharge, now chimed in. " Do not underrate the sovereign power of beauty, Talma, for in so doing you do Madame de Staël injustice. She who writes of the passions of men must know that it is Venus Victrix, and that the judgment of Paris has not yet been disputed by foolish men. And birth—what of that ? May I be permitted ? " bowing to the ladies ; " may I be listened to with indulgence ? " bowing to the Poet and the Tragedian ; and standing before them the Comte recited :

" Lizette, ta beauté séduit et
Charme tout le monde,
En vain la Duchesse rougit et la
Princesse gronde.
Chacun sait que Vénus naquit
De l'écume des ondes."

With heightened colour Madame de Staël applauded the Comte, who kissed her hand. " Tell us more about her," was all she said.

" Madame, this queen of beauty has rendered great services to her country, services that will never be understood by the generation who enjoyed and witnessed them. She is as beautiful as her portraits, and that is no small praise. Actress, dancer, singer, politician, the friend of a queen, and that queen the sister of our royal martyr, we must, I think, agree in admitting with M. Talma that she is (though a beauty) a woman of remarkable genius ; and to this unusual gift in a woman may be added other virtues," here he bowed with abject politeness to Madame de Staël, " for her kindness of heart is equal to her other charms. She does not wish to hide her humble origin, and provides her mother with every comfort. No," he said reflectively, " it has been circumstances that caused her downfall, for had

she been born in the position she now occupies, it is my belief that she would have added to her other merits that of chastity." To Madame de la Bouchardie, "She sings divinely. But it is not to an Englishwoman that I have lost my heart, but to one of the enemies of our country, for, more fortunate than Diogenes, I have found an honest man!"

"Come, come, Comte! Surely they are not so rare in France that you have to cross the Channel to find them? I say this for the honour of my native land, or land of my adoption, admitting at the same time that they are difficult to find. Still Diogenes was a pessimist."

"Yes, decidedly his views were the reverse of cheerful, but his philosophy is beyond criticism. He is like the Psalmist who sings 'All men are liars.' Do you question his views, too?"

Madame de Staël looked confused. "We will not quibble. Tell us of this Englishman."

"With pleasure. He is a sailor, a friend of Nelson, with mighty shoulders and an honest face, a face which reflects a noble soul. As brave as a lion, as gentle as a lamb, though a lamb that roars as the king of the beasts. A mystic without knowing it, a faithful husband, but the adorer of a Frenchwoman who is now among the blest. Unsuspicious as a child. Hospitable and generous. I do not think we can match my Admiral."

"Was he with Lady Hamilton?"

"No, he lives in Folkestone." And the Comte graphically described the scene of Jack's welcome home and its unexpected change of heroes.

"Why, he should be the hero of a romance!"

"Yes, madame, but what if he is one of the principal characters in one? That may be, you know; most lives are tragedies; why should not my hero's be a romance? But his figure precludes him from the first rôle; he can only poise as a glorious secondary, and as perhaps the greatest sufferer, for his valiant heart would require but little breaking. No, madame, you and I are too *voltairien* to render him justice on paper. I glory in the knowledge that, though a cynic, I have yet the

innate perception of the ideal; but then cynics are discouraged idealists, and the Admiral is my ideal of what a man should be."

"And your ideal for a woman?" cried both ladies with one voice.

"In your presence, ladies, I can give but one answer. You represent so much that constitutes perfection. But, being in my confidence, it will not surprise you when I repeat an old story," bowing to Chénier. "This is an anniversary for me too. My ideal, the love of my boyish dreams, the fairest of the fair and the purest of the pure, quitted this tumultuous fevered world, not alone, but escorted by a royal bodyguard of the bravest of the brave. Yes! dear friends, eight years ago to-day was murdered Louise, Duchesse de Verminoux—like your André, an innocent victim of the crimes of others. But we will not talk of her or of the past! We met, if I may be allowed to return to the present, to discuss modern religious views, and the theologian to be discussed was to be our distinguished compatriot, Pierre Charron. Though humbly suggesting a change of subject may I venture to remind you," bowing to his listeners, "that if France has faults she has the imperishable glory of being the great pioneer of modern thought. For instance, Europe will always place Charron as the first churchman who had the courage of his convictions, for he stands forth amid the clouds that veil the past, as the representative of the most complete intellectual scepticism. But, ladies, we will avoid the fever that controversy would entail, remembering that 'theologians resemble dogs that gnaw large bones for the sake of very little meat.' May I, the unsuccessful ambassador, be permitted to choose a subject to take the place of the one that the very elements forbid us to touch upon? Did you not hear it thunder?"

"Yes!" answered the assembled guests with one voice. "Let it be something to make us happy, for we all need cheering."

"Then, friends, may I suggest that the subject under discussion shall be 'Love *versus* position.'"

"Delightful! cried the listeners. "As the origina-

tor of the discussion you must place it before us, then we will give our judgment."

With masterly skill the Comte related the story of Gabrielle and her life at Folkestone, but so changing the locality and nationality of the characters of his story that with one exception all thought that he was relating some charming conception of his imagination. He drew the character of Jack neatly, clearly, and so distinctly that he seemed to be among them.

Madame de la Bouchardie sat delighted, while the brilliant black eyes of Madame de Staël looked wonderingly at the orator. At last she spoke: "Excuse me, Comte, your honest man was unusual, I admit, though now I will not recall my words that your churlish Diogenes could, if he would, have found his match in France; but what he could not have found would have been your lover, tender, constant, handsome, brave. No! You make me unhappy. Stop! I cannot listen any longer. The man who dared disturb such bliss would be worse than a murderer. Your heroine has all we women crave for, the love of the man she adores; she is the possessor of a heart that will always be hers, not only here (for I, too, am a mystic), but that will be hers for ever and ever! And you," standing up and declaiming with the passion of a great artist, "dare for one moment to question what should be the result of that unfortunate recognition? For the empty grandeur of a title you would rob a woman of her crown, for she is crowned, and with the only crown a woman cares for—the undivided love of the man she adores. There, I have given my verdict, let the others speak." And leaving her chair by which she had been standing, Madame de Staël walked to the window and, regardless of the coming storm, passed on to the balcony.

"I agree with Madame de Staël," said the mistress of the house, and, looking at the great poet, "and you?"

"I envy both the hero and the heroine. It is not given to all unhappy lovers to meet the one adored when youth is at its fairest and best; it is not to all that opportunity is so benign, and had I met, when a youth,

the woman I love, though I cannot say the love I could have offered would have been like your hero's without blemish, or my heart one, like his, that had never known but one sovereign, I think the man who deprived me of my happiness would be cruel. I have heard you say, Comte, that 'Love is a reality'—which is born in the fairy region of romance—so you must make, in your romance, 'Love triumphant.' In all lives there must be some to suffer; it is natural that a daughter will love some day and quit her father's home. Well, circumstances removed your heroine somewhat earlier than the time when nature murmurs her enthralling invitation. Do you think it would be possible to find another such a lover? Or can you imagine your heroine would ever be the same tender loving representative of unblemished girlhood did you tamper with her present happiness? No, we have given our verdicts, and love must carry the day!"

"But M. Talma has to express his views."

Smiling, the great tragedian began. "Now, Comte, what do you wish? To keep your masterpiece a charming pastoral, or turn it into a drama so intense in its passion that I will bring tears into the eyes of the most hardened spectators, for you must let me take the rôle of Jack. I did not know that you were such a universal genius!" Seeing the Comte shudder, "Ah! I see you will keep your story as the others wish, and let the charming young people marry and be happy ever after!"

"Yes," said the Comte, "circumstances sometimes aid coincidences. Ladies and gentlemen, you have given your verdict; but what would you say did I tell you that it was the father of my heroine who gave it before you did?"

"That he was the noblest of the noble!" cried Madame de Staël. "I must now say good-night. Comte, you have sent me home a jealous woman! Yes," she added sadly, "the goddess Pandora, while endowing me with many gifts, forgot one, underrated, perhaps, by those who possess it, the power of inspiring love! No!" elevating her voice, "admiration of mental powers may

be given me, but I shall never inspire love!" and, escorted by Talma, she left the room.

"Yours is a true story, Comte," said both the lady and the poet.

"Yes, you have guessed rightly, I have found the Duchesse's little daughter. I have every proof. I did what I thought my duty, my duty to the race of which I am an unworthy member, for you know that I am a believer in the influence of race. Well, I have been repulsed, for the Duc would not open my letter. He has returned it to-day with an insult—'Louis de Verminoux has not the pleasure of the acquaintance of Charles Maurice de Périgord de Talleyrand.' What am I to do?"

"It is the hand of God," cried Madame de la Bouchardie. "The lovers, happy lovers, are under His protection, and it is not for us poor erring mortals to destroy their bliss." Then, turning to Chénier, "Write me something that will express our views."

Then the Comte bade farewell, and walking home, made his arrangements. The next day his lawyer was with him for an hour; when he left, the Comte's secretary carried to his carriage a wooden box, and the lawyer followed with a small packet.

The Comte then wrote a letter. It was to Rafferty, telling him that he was contented with his information, but that it was useless, as Miss Woodruff was very likely to be mentally affected did she receive any shock.

On receiving the letter Rafferty looked delighted, and said, "Just what old Slateman says. Lor', he's a crafty cove that Dutchman! Well, I've my ship, and Master Jack's got Miss Kitty!—Hurrah!"

CHAPTER XIX

JACK'S WEDDING-DAY

Never had man more joyful day than this,
Whom Heaven would heap with bliss.
—*Edmund Spenser.*

THE village of Verminoux seemed unusually quiet on the morning of the 31st of August, 1806. Groups of its inhabitants stood in its principal street, and the expression on their faces did not accord with the universal prosperity so visible at every turn. Here and there a shop was open, but its proprietor stood outside, evidently waiting, like the other members of the community, for some expected news. The fields were deserted, for the tillers of the soil too were unable from anxiety and sorrow to proceed to their daily toil. The Church doors were wide open, as if some honoured guest had quitted it; the light before the altar was extinguished, and the gates of the Communion rails stood apart as though some ceremony had lately terminated. And such was the case, for early that morning the Abbé Dubois had received the expected notification from the Château; and shortly after a sorrowful little procession escorted the Blessed Sacrament to the bedside of the dying Duc.

As the messenger rode down the street, watchers at various windows put out their heads to ask for information, which the rider gave the first speaker and then rode directly to the Presbytery. The information was soon known to all, and though for some days all hope of the recovery of their beloved master had been abandoned, yet the knowledge that his hours were now numbered recalled the stupor of astonishment and grief

with which his old friends and neighbours had first heard that their pleasant companionship was to be severed.

Mon Plaisir was evidently deserted by its proprietors; the servants stood at the gates anxious and bewildered at the absence of both master and mistress. The dying man, though a prince, had been one of them in his human sympathy, and they had many an anecdote to relate of his kindly intervention between them and their somewhat tyrannical mistress.

At last the faint tinkle of a bell announced the return of the Sacrament, and the silence in the now crowded street became more accentuated. Under the vivid August morning sunlight the procession looked strangely pathetic, headed by the acolyte whose bell heralded its approach. So little had revolutionary ideas penetrated to Verminoux that the simple unquestioning faith of its inhabitants had undergone no modern influence, and there were no dissentients among the spectators bold enough to outrage the feelings of the majority by refusing to kneel as the Host passed before them. Slowly the procession wended its way Churchwards, and as the Abbé Dubois holding aloft the Pix passed through its open doors the onlookers became anxious to hear the last news, and a messenger was sent to the vestry.

He returned shortly with the information that the Abbé intended holding short services until the end, which would be announced by the lowering of the flag at the Château, and that he hoped that all his parishioners would join him in the prayers he was about to offer for their beloved friend who was now passing away The listeners looked at one another, and then one and all walked in the direction of the Church, which they entered, leaving the street vacant and the silence unbroken.

And so it continued until half-past eleven, when the flag on the tower of the Château descended slowly, and a boy watching gave a sign to the Abbé, who with solemn and trembling voice informed the congregation that the village had lost its friend, the man who had

been its pride and glory, who, if by the accident of birth had been given great possessions and worldly advantages, had been pre-eminent among his neighbours by his many woes. And to the human expressions of grief and sorrow the Church bell now added its doleful and monotonous clang, which announced to fields and forests, hills and dales, hamlets and distant villages, the loss of Verminoux. On many a hillside vineyard the labourers rested on their hoes and listened, and the foremost to hear would call to a fellow-worker—"He has passed then, the great Duc! Pray for him." In many a village cabaret during the dinner hour were his exploits gloried in; in many a humble home made prosperous by his bounty were his many virtues extolled. And while his virtues and his sorrows were the theme of his fellow-men, the dead man lay smiling on his bed, handsomer and happier than those who loved him could remember seeing him since his great loss. And Marie—Marie who had never left him, and whose hand had been in that of her master's to the last—bent over him again and again, and wondered, wondered at what?

Though a pious Catholic, Marie had views heterodox in the extreme, and probably had she lived two hundred years before she did those views would have brought her as surely to the stake as if she had been a red-hot Protestant. "Men were men, priests or no priests. That was all, but that was enough, and there were things they had no more notion of than an unborn babe!" So though Marie confessed, it was in part, the part she thought the Abbé Dubois as a man could understand; and the rest—well, she laid that before her Maker.

Now one of these phenomena, these unexplained coincidences, had come to pass among them. The Duc had been strangely happy the last few hours of his life—delirious, wandering, had been the verdict of both doctor and priest—well, perhaps they might be right. They should know, or why spend years in medical or theological colleges? But Marie shook her head. The Duc had wandered perhaps, but not as they thought, but as saints wandered in the old days, or as superstitious old wives still believe that the dying wander and visit

those they love afar. For he had been so happy, and it was not of his lost wife that his mind had been occupied, but of his lost child. When the Marquis and the doctor had never questioned but that it was of his wife and his own wedding-day that he rambled, Marie doubted. That he was somewhere, or had been somewhere she was certain, for, after the departure of the Abbé, exhausted by the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, the Duc dozed, but not for long. And it was after that last awakening that the strange visions became a certainty to the dying man. Marie had tried in vain to follow the purport of his muttered conversation, and in so doing share his joy. A wedding he was dreaming of, a wedding at which he was to be present—yes, present. "Whose wedding?" And Marie, who was now the only one by the sick man's pillow, for both son and doctor stood further off, leaving the old friends together, heard him murmur—"Gabrielle's, and happier than I could have ever made her." And then—"Marie, Marie, after my own heart! If you could see what I do. He is worthy of her, and I, her father, give her to him!" And then it was the last, for with a smile, the smile that never left his face, the Duc fell back even deeper among his pillows and was dead.

"Transfigured with joy at the reunion with the blessed," said the kindly Abbé Dubois. "Yes, dear friend," it was Marie his esteemed parishioner, that he was addressing, "our friend is translated to a higher sphere, and reunited with those he loved and lost."

And through the day Marie sat by the bedside, occasionally lifting the lace cover from the dead man's face, and wondered. The dream had indeed come true; he was never to clasp his lost child in his living arms, and even as she sat by his side, she, the living Marie, thought of the Duc's conviction: "You and Louis will receive her, she will come to me." And so she sat and thought, and the hours passed, and the 31st of August was a day of sadness and sorrow at Verminoux. But when any one alluded to her loss Marie invariably made the same answer, "Never fear! He is among the well-beloved," or, as the French say, "the very happy"!

But at Folkestone all was joy and festivity, for the wedding of weddings was to be celebrated at last. Though shorn of much of its *éclat* by the death of Lord Nelson, who was to have given away the bride, and whose loss still saddened the hearts of his old friends, still it was to be a grand affair; and did some old tar brush away something from his eyes as he thought of what it might have been, he apparently put sorrow aside and remembered that "things might have been worse."

For Jack had not been expected to recover from his wounds received at Trafalgar, and the memory of Kitty's face as her life's lover was carried into his home was something no sailor ever wished to remember, though those who saw it never could forget. Nursed by mother and sweetheart he would have been ungrateful had he not done his best to recover, and two months after his return to Folkestone, Jack was himself again.

The Admiral, too, had been given leave of absence "on urgent private affairs." For once Kitty had not acquiesced; she had made up her mind that Jack should never leave her again until they were married, and joining her supplications to those of her lover she carried her point, and after an engagement of six years the wedding-day was named at last. There was nothing to arrange; the two Mrs. Woodruffs would live together. The bridal dress had been in the house for more than a year—Lord Nelson's gift to "Psyche"—so costly that those who had been permitted to see it wondered how fingers could ever have embroidered the silver flowers on the white satin of the skirt, or woven the filmy wonders of the Spanish lace of which the train and veil consisted. And when, at about half-past ten on the morning of the 31st of August, 1806, Mrs. Woodruff, assisted by Miss Grainger and Martha, finished dressing the bride, they looked at one another in wonder, for their Kitty was their Kitty no longer.

That stately queen in shimmering white, with the silver butterfly poising, as it were, and trembling on the left side of the three silver bands which bound her head—for Kitty's hair had been arranged in the same

style that Romney had painted it in his picture—could never be their child? "She is a very duchess," was the verdict of the delighted attendants, for with this regal bridal attire she seemed in some way changed, and, as Collins, who was the first admitted to inspect, declared, "held her head even higher than afore!" She looked radiantly happy, but even at that supreme moment there was a suspicion of mistrust in her happiness. Kitty dreaded leaving No. 4,—her happy home. Even at the last moment, when dressing her, Mrs. Woodruff had to console her and promise her that during the interval of one week only there should be no change, but that she with the Admiral would visit their children daily during their stay at Sandgate, where the honeymoon was to be spent. The Admiral was facetious in his contempt at such cowardice, and with a hearty appreciation of his own wit suggested that he should go with Jack and stay at Sir John's; or, an even brighter inspiration, that he and Mother should go away for the honeymoon and leave Jack and Kitty to keep house!

But in their hearts all Kitty's devoted attendants understood that it was no idle whim of their beloved child's, but an innate dread that, like the forgotten home of her early childhood, this second home, too, with its dear inmates, might also vanish, never to be regained.

But Kitty always forgot these dire forebodings in the presence of Jack. Jack, who, as Folkestone etiquette demanded, was now waiting impatiently in the dining-room at Dr. Slateman's where, in accordance with custom, he had been spending a day or two.

Our hero cut no secondary figure on his wedding-day—they were fairly matched those life-long lovers. In his new uniform Captain Woodruff was indeed a son to be proud of and a credit to his country. He walked up and down the room feverishly, occasionally varying the programme by looking out of the window in the direction of his home, and feeling in the pocket of his white satin waistcoat for an imperceptible little packet wrapped up in white tissue paper. This he at last took out for a more minute inspection, and nervously un-

folded. He crumpled the tissue paper in his fingers and threw it under the table, and looked with delight at the gold ring which now lay in his hand. He put it nearer his eyes, for the motto that encircled the inner side was engraved in tiny letters, and read over and over again the words that expressed his devotion to his bride—" This ring and the giver are thine for ever." And then he heard footsteps in the hall, and his groomsman, with Dr. and Mrs. Slateman, entered the room, saying, " Don't you think we might start now ? "

Jack's heart stood still for a moment. It is all very well to be impatient, but a man's not married every day, and he knew that people had come miles to see " The Pride of Folkestone " on her wedding-day. But he took his hat in hand and left the house without even putting it on, for so hearty was his welcome that he walked bareheaded to the Church seeing nothing—poor Jack !—but bowing from side to side, and shaking hands wherever a hand was stretched out in his direction. He did not see much in the Church, in which there was not a vacant place.

His wits were gone, he felt sure, but, however, not so completely but that his fingers could fumble in his waistcoat pocket for that precious ring. His groomsman, Captain Deane, whispered, " Cheer up, old man, she's coming ! " and then above the bells which were ringing gaily Jack heard enthusiastic cheering—there was no doubt about it, his Kitty had left the house. He saw his mother and several lady friends assemble near him, and then, looking down the aisle he noticed the inmates of the pews, who were standing on the seats, stretching their necks to the uttermost, and then—taller than his father, walked his queen, a revelation of beauty to the man who had adored her from a boy ! Could this be Kitty ? Everything seemed to waver in zigzag lines, everything but Kitty—there was nothing in the Church but Kitty ! And Kitty seemed to be enjoying it immensely. She clung to his father's arm, it is true, but only to show him how she loved him, and as she advanced in his direction he could see her smile on either side.

Could Kitty be human? thought her lover. Did she not fall from the skies? Would she ever reach him, and stand beside him and say "I will." Never! He was not worthy of her, and Jack's tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, for this was not his old playmate. He could see his mother look at him, and then the vision had reached him, and, regardless of Clergyman and every one, had whispered "Jack!" and he was radiant once more, almost rash, for he took his place at the altar by the side of his darling without a scruple.

Some one besides Kitty seemed to encourage him now, to tell him that he, and only he, could ever make his darling happy, and giving up his individuality completely to that unknown influence Jack did his part in the marriage service satisfactorily. But when the great moment came, and Mr. Pim asked, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" Jack could have sworn that it was not his father's voice that answered "I do." So startled was he that he looked in his father's face and saw that his suspicions were not unfounded, for the Admiral looked as though he had received a shock But that was only momentary, and the service continued. Evidently no one else remarked anything. The ring was on! Kitty was his! The bells were ringing wildly. Amid general congratulations, he led his very own Kitty to the vestry.

And still the bells rang out their glad tidings, and Jack, who was a bell-ringer as well as a sailor, thought how their song of joy expressed his own, for as the treble rang out he remembered its motto—

> Although I am both light and small
> I will be heard above you all.

And the second's—

> I mean to make it understood
> That though I'm little I am good.

And the fourth sang as brave a song as any—

> Our voices shall with joyful sound
> Make hills and valleys echo round.

"Yes, every one for miles round will know that now we are married, Kitty and I!"

And the fifth, that was all right too, everything was right—

> While thus we join in cheerful sound,
> May love and loyalty abound.

And the seventh—why that sang for him and his darling!

> In wedlock's bands all ye who join,
> With hands your hearts unite;
> So shall our tuneful tongues combine
> To laud the nuptial rite.

He whispered the last of these mottoes to his wife. She who knew the bells and their pretty inscriptions as well as he did whispered back, "I have been saying it over and over again, Jack. I wish they would let us go up and help ring our own wedding-bells!" And Kitty, who never noticed in her excitement anything peculiar in the papers she signed, wrote her "Catherine Woodruff" in determined characters.

And then it was all over, and the handsome pair walked down the aisle together and down the flower-strewn path to No. 4, which was to be their home for all their wedded lives. And the Admiral, with his Bessie on his arm, though he gloried in his children, admired his wife of twenty-seven long years in his own large-hearted fashion; indeed, as he kissed her, he too had whispered something in her ear, "Bessie, old girl, you're handsome enough; our Kitty would have been too much for me!" To which tender compliment Mrs. Woodruff had rejoined, "John, you are a deceiver!" but she blushed and looked even happier than before.

At last they were all in the drawing-room, and the bride and bridegroom, standing beneath their pictures, received the congratulations of their more intimate friends. It was a wedding that seemed to promise all things—love, health, wealth and beauty, and it consolidated the family happiness. No one, whatever claims he might bring forward, could remove Kitty

from her husband's home. That had been the only wrinkle on the Admiral's perfect bliss—"Should any one claim our darling." And now—why let all France come forward, he was ready with his answer, "A wife's place is in her husband's home!" and the little homeless wanderer was now his—Admiral—John—Woodruff's—son's wife! No wonder, with the burden of the dread of losing his darling lifted from his heart, that the Admiral was even more exuberant than his oldest friends could ever remember having seen him! He kissed the ladies, one and all, and at the lunch—it was a banquet—which followed, made so many speeches, drank so many toasts, that he forgot that Jack was to take Kitty away for a whole week; and was in the very midst of a more than ordinary flight of fancy (He was proposing the health of Miss Grainger, and was getting hopelessly involved in his descriptive powers, and leaving his hearers even more entangled than the speaker, so that to the day of their death they never could make out "if the Admiral had proposed to that lady, or had the fair Judith herself proposed and been refused by the Admiral"—well, he was just at the point of the necessary explanations) when Sir John Crew's carriage drove to the door, and all the company rose from their seats.

Collins and Martha took their places in the rumble, and the crowd in the Churchyard began cheering, and the bell-ringers to redouble their efforts. Kitty, who was to drive to Sandgate in her wedding-dress (for the day was sultry, and she had been told that by that means only could hundreds who had come long distances see her), looked in dismay at Mrs. Woodruff. But before she could receive sympathy from any one she was kissed, pushed, and in the hall before she knew where she was; and Jack's arm was round her waist, father was by the carriage door, and she could only laugh—and she meant to cry, did they but give her time! But time was not given her, and the low barouche door was shut before she could speak. She could only throw her arms once more around the Admiral's neck, and cry, "I love you best, father, I love you

best!" and the carriage moved off, the horses made restive by the cheering.

And thus did the little wandering child leave the house that had welcomed her so many long years before. And its master, the valiant sea-captain, what did he do? Not so well as Kitty, who, smiling and happy, was bowing and kissing her hand to all her admiring friends. Why, he called his own son a scoundrel who had robbed him of his Kitty, and the only tears shed on Jack's wedding-day were shed by that arrant old deceiver, John Woodruff, R.N. As he sat in his hall, surrounded by his friends, he told them plainly that had Kitty been his own daughter she never should have married Jack, and that he had been influenced by Mrs. Woodruff. "She is too good for any man," was his final conclusion, to which all his men friends assented, and the ladies with one voice declared that Jack, the mourner's own son, was the only husband they knew suitable for Kitty, and had the Admiral forbidden the match, some other lover, possibly a Frenchman, might have "come along," and that Kitty would return in a week, "so why not dry your eyes and make the best of it; and go over to-morrow morning and see both your children?" As this seemed most reasonable advice, the Admiral dried his eyes, apologized to his Bessie, and said "it was all his own fault."

He then proceeded to show the company one of the bride's presents, and an extraordinary letter from its unknown donor. It was a magnificent box of Chinese puzzles, as fine a specimen of Chinese workmanship, as the letter was of primitive penmanship—but for all that it went to the Admiral's heart, and he liked it better than the box. "And so does Kitty," he informed his listeners, before beginning to read the letter. It was as follows:—

"Miss,—

"Unbeknown to ye I have loved ye, though humble. I thank ye for having made a better man of such a willian as I was afore I set eyes on your lovely little face. There ain't nobody in the world up to Master Jack, an'

he's worth ye, and that's not saying a little, mind ye. This box ain't worth the giving, but bide a bit.

"YOUR FIRST FRIEND."

After this the company retired, and the Admiral and his wife were left, as the gallant sailor said, "to spend their own honeymoon over again!" and in her handsome empire dress of peach-coloured satin, Mrs. Woodruff did look a wife any man could be proud of. So they spent a very happy evening, talking over old days, and, sitting before their children's portraits, wondered at their good fortune in possessing such a son and daughter.

At eight, the bells again rang out, and the Admiral asked for leave of absence from his Bessie, "as he wished to see the moon rise." His wife for twenty-seven years understood that it was solitude her dear old Darby required, so she gladly granted him "an hour all to himself." The Admiral crossed the road, entered the Churchyard, stood as usual bare-headed by his child's last resting-place, and then passed on to the cliffs.

The sea was very calm; ripples only fitfully quivered on its broad bosom. The moon, but just risen, threw long pathways of light across it, seemingly leading into the realms of the unknown. The Admiral stood and watched the sea until its whole surface was illuminated, and then he uncovered his head and looked heavenwards, and his lips moved as though speaking. And he did speak, and doubtless his words were carried into those distant visionary lands. Perhaps, too, he was surrounded by loving spirits who blessed him, and thanked him over and over again, and smilingly clustered round him, and comforted him for having given up his darling, even though it was to his own son. And then he trotted home quite happy, but resolved to go out shooting the next day with Sinclair and Ponto, and to take a look in on his children for the dog's sake—"Poor Ponto! how he would pine if he did not see his mistress!" And cheered even more by this prospect,

he sat down to his supper, to which only Mr. Pim, the Vicar, and Mr. Grey, had been invited.

After toasting the bride and bridegroom, the four old friends retired to the smoking-room and played a series of the most scientific rubbers. The Admiral had his wife for partner and her skilful play so delighted him that he again announced that he considered himself even more fortunate than Jack; and so, consoled by his old friends and the wife of his youth, the Admiral went to bed quite happy.

The next morning, attended by servant and dog, he started to "go shooting." He took the cliff path to Sandgate, but when only half-way he saw his children coming in his direction, and before five minutes had passed his Kitty was in his arms, and he heard Jack saying, "Father, Kitty would come to see if you were lost. We can never stay a whole week away from you, you must come to us!"

"The old birds must join the young birds then," shouted our old friend. "Well, so they shall. We will come this afternoon, but only for a week, and then we will all go back to our dear old nest. Shooting indeed! I've had enough shooting all my life, I shall leave the poor birds in peace!"

CHAPTER XX

THE TROUBADOUR

Faint not, faint heart, but
Stoutly say,
So be it.

—*Lucrece.*

IT was chilly, and the October evening dull and misty; so much so that Mrs. Rafferty had lighted a fire in her sitting-room; the copper kettle on it was singing gaily, but that was the only sound heard in the room. Occasional passers-by relieved this monotonous silence by fragmentary conversation, for the house was, as we know, on the street.

Everything in the room betokened prosperity, from the mistress of the house glowing with justifiable pride in her surroundings, to the plump cat that sat in the "Dutchman's corner" surveying the fire, and at the same time giving complaisant looks at her master, for this fireside festival was in honour of his return.

The *Princess Kitty* lay off Deal, and taking advantage of a calm her captain had "come ashore for a bit to look up the old gal." There is a prevailing opinion among the many that prosperity is bad for human nature, and that when enjoying the good things of this life we are more than ever liable to stumble into the snares so deftly laid for us by the Father of mischief. But in Rafferty's case it was precisely the reverse. With each accession to wealth and prosperity he seemed to mount a step higher as a man and a Christian, and our old friend was now a light among the good people of Deal. "Ain't as young as I were," was his favourite remark when answering thanks for some donation of

his to a local charity. "Such a short time left me—not that I hope by deeds to wipe out my score. The Lord's done that. But it's the remorse as I feel. Lor'! I ain't got no pleasure now but what I can do for the old gal, and to make amends. I can't do much but give, sing, and jaw a bit to the mates of what's hell-fire. Hell-fire, sir, is what a chap feels when he knows as he's gone to mercy but can't take the chaps along with him as he's sent to hell—that's me!" and the expression on Rafferty's face was as tragic as his confession.

As he sat thinking by the fireside, Mrs. Rafferty knew that he was "up to something," and, being curious, wondered when he would be "out with it." At last she was consulted.

"Susan," said her husband, "I ain't much to look at, are I?"

Now love is blind, and after a stormy early married life the "old gal" was the most indulged of wives, so this question "took her back," and she hesitated.

"Don't talk nonsense," said her husband; "I knowed as what you would wish to say, but, lor', it ain't no use. I look, Susan, the willian I used to be. Even," said he reflectively, "if I could change my face a bit there's always my legs," and he stretched out his bandy legs and dolefully surveyed them. "I shall risk it though, old gal! I was a willian as ye know, a willian as thrashed ye till ye couldn't stand, and I look what I was—there! But I'll do it!"

"Do what?" said his wife. "Do what? Nothing dangerous, for I couldn't live without ye!"

"Shut up!" shouted Rafferty. "You'll not mind, as is a woman and likes such things, for I'm off, Susan! I'm off to Spain, and as a Troubadour! You know, Susan, a sort of chap in velvet smalls and ribbon round his legs, as sings under ladies' winders and makes love!"

"Lor'!" said Susan. "An' maybe as who do you wish to make love to in Spain?"

"There, you are jealous! Why, woman, I thought ye had more sense. It ain't no woman's winder as I shall sing under, but Master Jack's. There, you understand now?"

"No," said Mrs. Rafferty, "I can't, there!"

Her husband looked at her indulgently, as a lord of creation should do at a weaker vessel. "Poor old gal," he thought, "ain't got much go!" Then he smiled with pleasure and explained himself. "I've been a-reading history on board the *Princess*, that's where I got the notion—no honour to me, so don't be a-saying 'Silias, you aire clever!' for I ain't. Well, when King Richard, as was called Curdy Lion, was took prisoner, no one knowed as where he was kept but a Troubadour chap—like as I'm going to be—well, he goes to the land where he heard tell the King was and sang under every prison winder until he came to the right one, and he heard the King a-answering him. That's what I'm going to do, old gal, and it's you as'll be the first to say 'get.' I know ye and what ye think of Miss Kitty."

Mrs. Rafferty threw up her hands in dismay. "You don't mean to tell me," she said, "as there's bad news at Folkestone?"

Her husband nodded and said sorrowfully, "Missing! Ain't killed, so far as his body ain't forthcoming, but they've put 'missing' down in the *Gazette*. But I see a chap yesterday, a French prisoner, as says he's alive, but a prisoner. If he's above ground, old gal, your husband's the man to find him. Now what do you say about it?"

"I ain't worthy of ye, that's all," said his wife. "Do they know about it at Church Street?"

"Yes," said Rafferty, "the Admiral, Collins, and his mate do, but they ain't told Mrs. Woodruff for fear as she should fret and so upset Miss Kitty, who's as happy as a bird with her little gal."

Mrs. Rafferty was much affected.

"Don't sniff," said her husband. "You can do that when y'er a widder woman with the rest, but I ain't a-dying yet, any more than Master Jack's dead, as'll live to fly his flag higher than any of them. I'm off to Folkestone to-morrow, and from Folkestone I drop down somewhere off the coast of Spain. Bill will take my place aboard while I go a-troubadouring. Sing under a woman's winder indeed! Well, when I'm back

I'll give you a song under yours. Now make me a dish of tea; the kittle's a-boiling, and I'll drink your health in it, old gal, and to our next merry meeting, which'll be in Folkestone. And if I should be took and go under, don't fret, old gal! It's mighty little as I give for what was give me, for if I bring my Princess's husband back, why it's nothing to being resc'ed from williany and perdition. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.' I may be a happier man, too, after it, for if I did rescue some one, some one whose death would cause great sorrow, maybe as I should not fret so over the chaps as swung for me."

After this confidence Rafferty drank his tea, explained to his wife his arrangements for the future, petted his cat, and wrote a letter. It was addressed to Captain Van Leydan.

"This'll go to Paris by a special messenger," he said, "for it's for my Dutch pal as is living in Paris now."

The next morning by seven he was off to Folkestone. The wind had freshened, and Bill was ordered to bring the ship down as soon as possible. On arriving at Folkestone, the Troubadour felt anxious, for he knew that he was not looked upon by the Admiral with favourable eyes. Rafferty was considered by our old friend a rascal in his early days, and a canting rascal now. But, conscious of his good intentions, he knocked at the door of No. 4, and asked if he might see the Admiral. He winked at Collins, who fortunately opened the door, and whispered in his ear, "Do your best, for it's for Master Jack and our darling."

Collins hastened to the smoking-room where his master was sitting, and, if the truth must be told, looking very unhappy.

He was now on the retired list, for even his iron constitution had given way during the disastrous expedition to the Scheldt, when he had not only contracted fever, but lost a leg. But these past misfortunes were as nothing to the uncertainty of the present; and the fact that this uncertainty had to be endured without the sympathy of his beloved Bessie, made our old friend look a very "knight of the doleful countenance."

On Collins announcing the visitor, he looked testy and was on the point of refusing to see him, but Collins anticipated this refusal by saying, "He's come about Master Jack."

That was enough. "Show him in," cried the Admiral. "Show him in;" and Rafferty was ushered into the room.

"What's your business, Captain?" said the Admiral. "Mrs. Jack's servant tells me that you have news."

"Yes, sir," answered Rafferty, "not much though, but a little hope, and a little hope goes a long way. I've come to tell you that I'm off to Spain! Off to Spain to bring him back to his wife, as was the first to lead me away from wice, and no wonder, as she is herself an angel lent us, Admiral, lent us to show up our williany!"

This opening shot went straight to the weak spot in the Admiral's armour, and he thawed visibly. "What have you heard?" said he.

Rafferty told his slender news in much the same words as he had used to his wife the evening before, at the same time admitting his listener to his confidence as regards his plan of campaign. "I can pick up any lingo," said he, "if I sing it; and I never knowed but as they all come and listen, and feed me well too. I'm a born troubadour, though not much of one to look at. If he's above ground I'll find him, there! I can get through any French camp—listen!" and Rafferty sang with dramatic force the Marseillaise, the Admiral listening with delighted admiration.

"You'll be singing to the Emperor, man," cried he.

"Ah!" said the singer, "it's some great bloke as I must try and get round." Then he looked piteously at the great sailor, and said, "And she! You'll not let her fret? I'd give my life for her over and over again! I'm—I'm the first friend!"—and before the Admiral could get over his astonishment he was alone. "Damn my wooden leg!" he shouted in his frenzy at being unable to follow his visitor.

"Collins! Sinclair! Run after him! Quick, you land-lubbers, run! Tell him that I am his friend, and that I love him! Go! You will catch him, bandy-legs!

Troubadour! Ha, ha! I know him!" To Collins, who returned shortly after with a grateful message from the fugitive, "We will have a syllabub to-night, tell your mistress, for before long we shall see Mr. Jack." And that evening he sat in his glory with his granddaughter on his knee, and toasted with His Majesty King George, "our Troubadour," and the company marvelled greatly.

That night Mrs. Woodruff was admitted into his confidence. "Bessie," said her husband, "I cannot stand it any longer! You know it's 'in sickness and sorrow until death does us part.' I can't keep silent any longer, dear, for you must keep me up. I am uneasy about Jack! Our boy, Bessie! Until this morning I was nearly desperate; I don't know when I have had a good night's rest. He is missing, Bessie, and has been for over three months! But I have had news to-day; there is just a chance that he is a prisoner, and Kitty's 'first friend,' you know, Bessie, the man that sends her those beautiful presents, and who is no other than that rascal Rafferty (God forgive me for calling him such!) is going out to Spain, and, disguised, intends visiting all the military prisons. You know what a voice he has? He is going to sing his way through Spain as a troubadour. And, Bessie, mark my words, he will bring us back our boy! He was always one too many for those who were placed in authority over him, and if our boy's alive, Bessie, he is the man to find him. We will talk about this when we are by ourselves, and keep one another company in our uncertainty. But not a word downstairs. He is going as a troubadour, Bessie! You know him? Red hair! Bandy legs! Ha! Ha!"

Though Mrs. Woodruff was aghast at this unexpected news, she bore up wonderfully, and cheered her husband so tenderly, that the exhilaration of the morning was not only kept up, but after a good long chat the hero of the Scheldt went to bed quite happy and slept like a top.

Such gentle winds wafted the *Princess Kitty* to the

haven where her gallant Captain wished her to be, that on his return to Deal Rafferty declared, with the fervour of a religious enthusiast, that from the first he and his mission were under Divine guidance; and so solemn was the purport of his subsequent narrative, never related but on Sunday evenings, and then over an open Bible, that we do not wonder that this opinion of his was shared by those among his friends who were permitted (in strict confidence) to know the truth.

After leaving the Downs and the English Channel with everything in her favour, the *Princess Kitty* glided over the Bay of Biscay, and in less than a fortnight was off the coast of Spain. Taking advantage of a dark night, her Captain landed at Santander, his good ship proceeding under the charge of "Bill" to safer quarters at the mouth of the Tagus, Rafferty himself being *en route* for Burgos. The Admiral was right—he was one of those who may talk about visiting every prison in Spain, but who have all the time a very shrewd intimation of the locality of the one in which may be found the captive for whom the wary traveller has undertaken to search.

On landing, the Troubadour was soon among friends who, though still indifferent characters in a religious sense, were ready to give him any assistance that their very limited scope of action permitted. With their aid, a costume was soon "rigged up," and it suited our hero admirably. That of a troubadour, "in velvet smalls with ribbons round his legs," had to be relinquished with regret, and a very nondescript religious dress substituted. So it was in the guise of a lay brother, "a sort of a chap as wears petticoats," leading a donkey laden with useful commodities for soldiers, that Rafferty sallied forth on his romantic errand.

Before he started he learnt to tell his beads. "Never do if it looks as I didn't know how to tell 'em; if it is being a Papist that's a jolly sight better than being a willian, and they tell me they take a lot of chaps to glory," from which remark it is plainly to be seen that Rafferty was no bigot.

So early one morning, "Frère Christopher," telling

his beads devoutly, but with a wary eye on his wilful, self-opinionated ass, left Santander. He began as he meant to go on, and strangely it was not under prison windows that he sang, but he never passed a Church without visiting it, telling his beads devoutly, and, if a service was going on, joining in the singing. By this means he soon made friends not only of fellow-travellers, but among the "Padres," who considered him, though a Frenchman, a saint. After a long and tedious journey through rocky passes and much wild and awe-inspiring scenery, he arrived at Burgos, from which city Wellington had only just retired after his disastrous failure to take the citadel on the 18th of October. The siege being over, the city was again in the hands of the French, who were naturally triumphant. As our worthy friend followed his donkey through the streets, he cast many a wistful glance in the direction of the great fortress that had baffled the genius of Wellington, and the reckless courage of the English army under his command. As he did so he murmured, "He is there, or my name ain't Sly Rafferty! But how am I to get to him, for they mean to shoot 'im when the Marshal gets up!" And the expression on the lay brother's face was far from serene or hopeful.

Aided by a fellow-traveller, he found sleeping accommodation for man and beast, and surrounded by rough but honest folks he took a night's rest, despairing, but not daunted.

While awaiting his opportunity, and at the earnest solicitation of a Padre, with whom our friend had not only prayed but recited his rosary, he accompanied him to the Cathedral, unaware that he was to behold one of the largest and most beautiful edifices that Christianity possesses. A great modern author has expressed his sentiments on first seeing the exterior of Burgos Cathedral with its innumerable spires, its two belfries and lofty centre tower, all thickly decorated with the statues of angels, martyrs, warriors, kings, and princes, so placed that they give the spectator the impression of a celestial legion soaring heavenwards, in the following beautiful words:—

"Before entering the Church one's imagination has already risen above earthly things." And so it was with "Frère Christopher," as he stood with wide-open mouth facing the Cathedral in the little Piazza by which it is approached. He was almost overpowered by its magnificence, and, had he but known it, by the mysterious attraction which the building possesses, by its elevating influence, for from its sacred walls there seems to issue a challenge—"Dost thou disbelieve? If so, look and be wise. Faith built me! I express the song of triumph of thousands of angels and archangels, and a mighty company of sinners whose souls are now with the blest! Believe! Rejoice! Make glad with me!"

His friend looked at him attentively, and said, "Brother, we will pray here together, and you must sing, sing as you have never sung before." Rafferty nodded assent, and then they passed through the principal door and were inside. High Mass had just begun, so without further inspection the two men approached the altar. Though not crowded, there was a large congregation. Devoutly kneeling by his friend, the "Padre," Rafferty deported himself as a pious Catholic should, and with the ease of a bird aided the choir to the best of his ability, by so doing attracting the attention not only of the bystanders, but of the officiating clergy; and when, before the elevation, the choir sang *Adeste Fideles* he joined in—no! not joined in, but triumphantly led the choir, singing as he had never sung before, for the very walls of the Cathedral resounded again and again, indeed the groups of saints, angels, cherubim and seraphim, whose marble forms people the Cathedral, seemed to listen as though in ecstacy. He himself felt unreal, and he could never express what he did feel, but when the hymn was nearly finished, and the singer was at the highest moment of his inspiration, something told him to look round. Unwillingly he did so, and saw—what? Leaning against a pillar the man he sought! Higher and higher, sweeter and sweeter, flew Rafferty's hymn of praise, and when the voice of the singer was heard no longer

the silence in the Cathedral was unbroken for a few moments.

Rafferty bided his time, for he knew that he could soon join Master Jack; indeed he expected to be joined by him, and wondered why he gave no sign. But the relief of finding him free to go about, apparently unguarded, surprised him; and as he knelt and worshipped, with his prayers—much to his distress—came intruding thoughts. When the service was over he said a word or two to his new friend and, mingling with the crowd, advanced in the direction of the pillar against which Jack leaned. On nearing the object of his search he was surprised to find him dressed in the uniform of a French artillery officer, and still more so, when on turning he saw plainly that he, Rafferty, was unrecognized.

Undaunted by this extraordinary behaviour he advanced and addressed him thus: "Master Jack! Captain Woodruff! Don't you know me, sir?"

The officer thus addressed looked surprised, then amused, and finally, flushing with evident emotion, answered, but in French—"You mistake me, brother, for——" he hesitated, and then continued, "for one I resemble," bowed, and seemed to wish to pass on.

But Rafferty, not to be repulsed, followed him, and when out once more in the Piazza spoke again, and then in French.

"Yes, I mistook you, my Captain, for one for whom I search, for one whose safety is very dear to me, and who, I am told, is a prisoner there," and he pointed in the direction of the Fortress. "Have you a wife, a lovely tender wife? If so, have pity on him and on me who have come from England to gain news for her."

The French Captain looked round him suspiciously, and then replied, "I am his friend, we are as brothers, though"—here he looked unhappy—"I took him prisoner."

Rafferty's eyes almost bolted out of his head, but he was not one to make a false move.

"And you regret it, my Captain? I know that you do, and will aid me to see my beloved master?"

"Yes!"—the yes came sorrowfully—"Yes, I will do my best. Your time is unfortunately very short, for the Marshal may be here to-morrow, and then I fear the worst."

"The worst!" said Rafferty, and added quickly, "Then you think he will be tried and shot?"

"Yes," answered the Captain. "But an effort is going to be made on his behalf. But"—seeing Rafferty look all hope—"the Marshal has sworn to shoot him in revenge for the atrocities Wellington permitted his soldiers to perpetrate at Badajos; they were a disgrace to civilization, as you know."

"Take me to him," was all Rafferty said. "I go with you on my honour, blind me, I give my eyes for him. I can pass as a brother. I am a sailor and can sing. Has Master Jack told you about his family, his wife and child? You tell me that he is to you as a brother?"

Bending down the Frenchman whispered, "I have seen her portrait. Trust me, I will do my best. Come, sing and beg, and you may be admitted. If not I must try other means. You are a marked man now, the whole town will be talking of you by this time; sing, and ask alms for the wounded, but do not look for me." Returning, he said hurriedly, "I am there, I am his guardian, he is my prisoner, and my honour is engaged. My name is Louis Giraud. Do your best, you do not lack courage," and then Rafferty found himself alone.

He rejoined his first friend, the Padre, who asked him to return to the Cathedral, as the Bishop was anxious to secure his services for the next day. "Can't promise," was the answer. "In time of war there is no such thing as to-morrow for many a brave fellow who would put you and me to shame. If I am alive tell the Bishop 'Yes.' I am going round the town now, so you will not see me for an hour or so."

The streets were crowded with soldiers and camp-followers, and money seemed plentiful, in marked contrast to the scarcity of that useful commodity among the late masters of the town. So Rafferty soon disposed of the greater part of his wares, but he prudently reserved

some in hopes that by their means he might get admittance into the Fortress, for while engaged in bargaining he had steadily kept his steps turned in its direction. When conveniently near, and nearer still to a group of officers who had evidently been told of his success in the Cathedral, our wily compatriot felt it incumbent on his part as a Frenchman to sing the Marseillaise, and it must be admitted that a more favourable moment for playing his trump card could not have been selected, for he had hardly begun when he was surrounded by a silent crowd, and when he had finished found himself hoisted on the shoulders of ardent admirers and borne by them into the very Fortress itself in order that he should sing before the Commandant, his donkey being escorted by those who had not been able to get near the singer. And when standing before the flagstaff he did his very best to glorify the national hymn of France, and gave as a supplement the imperial song of "Partant pour la Syrie," the enthusiasm of the garrison knew no bounds. Our worthy friend was not only cheered, but kissed with a violence that astonished him, and made him, when again in his snug parlour in Middle Street, say reflectively, "I knowed then what it was to be a woman, poor creturs!"

Among the officers who surrounded the Commandant, Rafferty recognized Captain Giraud. On the termination of "Partant pour la Syrie," he was called forward and presented with a napoleon, for which he thanked the Commandant with the abject humility of a lay brother whose mission was to collect alms for the sick and wounded.

Invited by the soldiers to share their midday meal, our friend accepted, and paid for the hospitality he received with many a song. On leaving the mess, he was joined by Captain Giraud, who had evidently been watching for him in order to tell him something. But he had barely time to whisper :—"He knows that you are here; meet me by the flagstaff this evening. No one will join us, and by choosing such a locality any suspicions as the to purport of our conversation will be averted."

He had barely finished when a commotion in the main barracks was heard, and the windows, as though by magic, were filled with heads, and a voice clearer than the rest was heard to shout—"The Marshal! Vive la France!" Then Rafferty became aware of a steady noise coming in the direction of the Fortress, a noise of many wheels; but above the sound of horses' hoofs and the clatter of artillery, came the never ceasing tramp, tramp of human feet.

"Sooner than was expected," was his remark. "I will watch them come in; I still hope."

"Only the Marshal and his staff will remain here," said Captain Giraud. "Why, he is bringing an army with him!" But before he could say more, cheering was distinctly heard, enthusiastic, irrepressible, coming evidently from the hearts of the cheerers. "That's not for Marshal Soult!" exclaimed Giraud. "Who can the Emperor have sent us now?"

Heartier and lustier grew the cheering. Giraud, looking more excited as each moment passed, at length ejaculated, "I thought so! It's Bellais! Marshal Bellais, the Emperor's friend and the idol of the French army!" and he rushed forward to welcome the newcomers.

Nothing was yet to be seen in the street immediately before the Fortress. The advance was evidently checked, for now sharp commands could be heard. After a few moments the band struck up the Marseillaise; the cheering recommenced, and Rafferty felt that the man in whose hands Jack's fate rested would soon be before him. The guns volleyed forth a salute, and by the time the smoke had cleared away the two Marshals had made their entrance. Rafferty gazed at Soult and did not feel reassured; then his eyes were glued in admiration on his companion—"Same age about as Master Jack, and as fine a soldier as t'other is a sailor! My! but any fellow could fight under him!" and then, with a rapidity of discernment which would have surprised any one but Talleyrand, "He's my man, I must get round him!"

Sitting his horse as though the animal and its rider

were but one, slight and sinewy, and with the rare distinction of manner which had been one of the characteristics of the Duc de Verminoux, Pierre Bellais's appearance merited the admiration it always excited. Though he resembled his father in features and hair, he inherited quite enough of his mother's beauty to make him a handsome edition of that father. His dark eyes, like those of Madame Bellais, looked defiantly on all that surrounded him, but their seeming hardness was corrected by the sweetness of his mouth. A soldier whose career had been as unblemished as his success, he shared with his Imperial master and friend the adoration of all those he commanded. Moreover, he inspired great personal love among men, for no woman could boast of having won his heart even for "un amour passager." It was whispered that he had lost the one woman who could have made him happy, but even that was vague rumour.

He got off his horse, and while standing complimented the Commandant on his glorious achievement. Then Rafferty noticed that he looked even handsomer "ashore than a-horseback." He looked on and wondered what would be the upshot of it all, and by the time he came out of his brown study, marshalls, commandant, staff and officers had all disappeared. "Going to hold a court martial?" said he to a sergeant near.

"No, brother, to-morrow will be the day for that, and soon enough too."

"Any one going to be shot? Spy?"

"No, not a spy, but the English officer who nearly took the Fortress, and would have done so, too, I believe, only his men got mixed up with Captain Giraud's, and then it was all up with them, they lost their chance. They are as like as two peas; that confused the men; but, if Captain Giraud had not misled them, why the English would be here now!"

"Captain Giraud is my friend," said Rafferty, "and yours?"

"Yes," said the sergeant, "he comes from my town, Rouen; we are both Normands! His wife too, I knew, the prettiest girl I have ever seen, poor girl!"

"Not dead?' cried Rafferty.

"Yes, that is why the Captain is so unhappy. He courts death, that is why he took the English officer; he believed that both sides would shoot at him, but he has no chance; he bears a charmed life."

Something—was it hope?—flashed across Rafferty's ever active brain, but, give him his due, he shuddered at the thought.

"You look pale, brother! Turn in and take a nap. Your donkey's all right."

Too sly to ask questions, Rafferty did as requested, and waited anxiously for the evening. He sang a song or two at the request of the Commandant, and received a handsome donation to his fund from Marshal Bellais. Rafferty's plans were being perfected. "If I can get the Captain chap to get me Miss Kitty's portrait, may be as I can bring him round to care for beauty and virtue." Later on he sat with Giraud and they talked on until it was late, and when they separated Rafferty knew all, and he knew too that he could save Jack's life—but at what a sacrifice! "A sort of murder it would be, that's all, but enough for me. No! if the idea does not come into his own head I'm not the man to put it there. No! I shall try the other chap." He was not to see Jack. No! in spite of all his entreaties Giraud was firm, but while relentless as regards a personal interview he undertook the transmission of letters, and they comforted him not a little. "My honour is engaged," was his final answer, "I would prefer losing my life to my honour." At these words the same terrible thought crossed Rafferty's brain. "I ain't got nothing to do with it, there!" was his mental answer to the thought. "I've to give up to higher Powers!" And then he was told more about the lost wife and the mourner's vain tempting of death. "It must be an honourable death, brother, nothing that she could be ashamed of, don't you see?" and Rafferty said "Yes," and wondered.

Sleep was naturally out of the question. The next morning found him more wary than ever, and, though he did not know it, highly strung. He knew the court

martial was going on. He stood for what seemed hours watching for the return of the prisoner, and was at length rewarded by the sight of Jack. He knew the verdict at once, for if Jack's face did not express it, Giraud's did.

"Now it's for me to take the field," thought Rafferty, "but I must get the portrait first." Two hours later the object of his wish was in his hand, for Jack had acceded to his earnest prayer of, "It's a last chance, sir! for her sake send it me!"

CHAPTER XXI

BURGOS

He was a man, take him for all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again
—*Hamlet.*

NOW what, in the name of Fortune, had taken Jack Woodruff to Burgos? Ah! that was the question he asked himself over and over again as he sat thinking of the sorrow his folly would bring on those who, if they took pride in his being a defender of his country, did not think him capable of literally throwing away his life. Years after, it was Rafferty who satisfactorily settled the question: "Couldn't 'elp it, just the fighting powder you was born with; couldn't get enough brushes on sea, so ye took a holiday with the red coats!"

Yes, Jack, whose ship was in the harbour at Lisbon, had gone to the front to see a friend, and "did take a turn with the red coats," and, after much dash and go, found himself a prisoner. He was well treated, and would in all probability have been exchanged had not Wellington's success at Salamanca caused the French army to fall back on Burgos. He was fortunate enough to escape a few days before the arrival of the English army there on September 19; not warned by past misfortune, he volunteered for the general assault on the Fortress, which still remained in the hands of the French, and had it not been for the extraordinary appearance of his "double" would have gathered fresh laurels as one of the leaders of the assault. As it was,

Giraud proved the best man, and saved what Jack would fain have conquered. With the exception of a month, he had been in durance vile since spring, and the anxiety had told on him. He was more like his portrait than ever, and as he sat by Giraud, looked as sad and distraught as the brave Frenchman.

Sitting side by side this resemblance seemed even more remarkable than when they were apart. They were as like twin brothers in form, features and expression, as they were twin souls in their unsophisticated natures. Giraud had been speaking, evidently pressing some very delicate question. "He seems to think that if you entrusted her portrait to him that he could still do something. And if you do, what difference can it make? You do not require to look at a painted miniature when the original of that miniature is indelibly imprinted on your heart. Let me take it to him."

"I wonder," said Jack, "if there is recognition in Heaven? I mean among friends, among those who have not known one another on earth. For instance, your Lucie—will she understand or know that you have been my friend? For you know if what we both believe be true, I may see her to-morrow! Don't think that I dread death; that would be ridiculous, for we have both braved it a hundred times; but sitting here as we are now one cannot help wondering—you understand?"

"Yes, I understand all," replied his companion, "and I do believe, I believe that to-morrow you will be"—here he paused, and then said—"happy. To make those we love happy is the only true happiness. I"—here he again paused—"have no one in this wide world; there is no one who counts the hours until my return, no one who prays for my safety. My child you will say. Why he loves his grandparents; they have taken our place—Lucie's and mine. You must tell her that I am, oh! so lonely!"

"No, Giraud," said Jack, "you would not wish me to do that. I could say, 'He does his best who does his duty,' that would express all, would it not?"

"Yes," said the man, almost happily, "yes. Now let me take your treasure, I will return at once," and

he went to the window and stood under it, for it was too high to look out from.

A few minutes passed, then Jack said, "Here, Giraud." Without looking Giraud took the picture, and left the cell.

On joining Rafferty, the latter was surprised by his jaunty step and cheerful countenance; so much so that he said, "Any news, my Captain?"

"No," said Giraud. He paused, and said reflectively, "but I have great hopes of your success with the Marshal. I cannot stay with you, do your best!"

Left to himself Rafferty began to see difficulties in his path. The Marshal was out, and rumour said busy at reorganising brigades, regiments, commissariat and what not. The soldiers spoke complacently of these changes, and informed "Frère Christopher" that if the Emperor would but leave Marshal Bellais in Spain, "Why, we should drive those dogs of English into the sea, as the Emperor says we should, 'with a sword in their reins.'"

"Frère Christopher" acquiesced, and prudently left Wellington to look after the general interest of the English army while he stuck to the individual claims of one prisoner. He was glad to find among these foes of his nation a general feeling of admiration for Jack. "That's the bad side of war," said another soldier. "The prisoner? why, send him to France, I say! Why shoot as brave a man as I have ever seen?"

Then Rafferty sat down and wondered. Hours passed; he took the meals so generously offered by the soldiers. Yes, he even ate and sang, though a musical critic would have remarked a tremble sometimes in his naturally powerful voice. It was dark when the clatter of horses' hoofs announced the return of the Marshal with his staff. By the light of a lamp over the door of the entrance to the Commandant's quarters, Rafferty could see that Marshal Bellais looked worried and angry, as though, not only had the day been one full of anxiety, but as if he had been unsuccessful, as indeed was the case. Soult would brook no contradiction, and the younger man felt that his mission would only provoke

disaster by enraging the man whom it was impossible for him to supplant. Rafferty shook his head, and resolved to wait another hour. "Each minute counts now," he thought, "but it ain't no use upsetting a chap over his victuals!" About half-past eight he sent in a humble message to know if he, "Frère Christopher," could be received by the Marshal on urgent affairs, as he hoped to leave the next day for ——. An aide-de-camp followed the orderly, who brought back the message: "The Marshal would see the Brother if his business could not be communicated by Major Le Fèbre." "Frère Christopher" cringed even more abjectly, and intimated to the aide-de-camp that his information was for the Marshal's ear alone.

"You will have to wait, then. A council of war is to be held in ten minutes, and it may last till dawn."

Dawn! Rafferty's blood ran cold! "The Marshal will see me then?" was all he said.

"Yes, the Marshal never disappointed a petitioner whose errand was a serious one. Naturally the penalty paid by those who intrude on trivial matters is severe. Are you prepared for the consequences should he dismiss your plea as unworthy of the time he will give you?"

"Yes," said "Frère Christopher," "I will pay the penalty with my life and think it cheap," and his eyes expressed such anguish that without further parley the aide-de-camp left him and informed the Marshal that "the Brother would take no refusal, and would wait till the morning if need be."

"Let him wait here," was the answer, "then I cannot forget him, as I must pass through on my return from the council. You will be here!"

And so, after the departure of the Marshal, Rafferty was ushered into the Cabinet, and waited there till the sky grew grey. It was a night of even greater agony than that terrible night in the lockup at Deal. Then he trembled for his own life; now it was for the life of another for whom he would willingly have given his own. As the aide-de-camp's pen untiringly scratched on, occasionally thrown down as the writer searched for information from some other paper, or opened drawers

in the writing table, to be taken up and used again with renewed vigour, so with Rafferty, his brain never rested. He was with the Admiral; in Jack's cell; even with Kitty, sleeping so peacefully with her child's cot by her bed side. And time was so short, and there were no sea-dogs about to help him. He was all alone; only he to look after so much that was precious to those unconscious sleepers in far off Folkestone. The Admiral would be disappointed in him; yes, he was sure of that! For Rafferty had seen unbounded confidence in his eyes when he narrated his plans for Jack's rescue. "He was as certain that I should bring him back as I was about coming. He thought too highly of me—as is but a broken reed!" His eyes rested on his beads, he told them over and over again. "It must be nearly five now," he thought, and then the clock struck! Horror! Only an hour now! He turned cold, and would have cried out loud in his anguish had he been able, but his throat was dry. "If he comes now, I cannot speak," was his ultimate horror.

A sound of footsteps, the clang of accoutrements, the murmur of voices, an imperious hand on the handle of the door, and Marshal Bellais entered the room.

What an angry face! That was no man to ask a favour of! No chance there, even if he, the petitioner, could speak, could cry for mercy!

"Advance! Be brief—my time is short!" And Rafferty stood before the man who could give Jack his life. Hardly human in his agony, he was at bay, but no intelligible speech came from his lips, only the gibberings of an idiot. He was no idiot, though; he was conscious of everything, even of the galloping of a horse across the barrack yard! He put his hand to his breast, where lay the portrait, and taking it out threw it at the Marshal, and fell at his feet in a fit.

Giraud, after executing his military duties, returned to his prisoner, who had occupied the afternoon by writing many letters. They were all to his father—his father and mother were one to Jack. To Kitty he

could not write. "Father will arrange all that," was his constant thought. "Father will do his best. Oh! my darling! I have thrown away your happiness as well as my life!—and we, father and I, only lived for your welfare! Rafferty, poor chap, he has done his best; I must tell father that!" So he wrote another letter about his would-be rescuer. He was in spirit with his loved ones. Strangely it was not as his wife and sweetheart that he thought of Kitty. No, he was away back to the old times when she first came to them, before her illness, to the time when he first gave her his heart; and he saw again and again the lovely child come down the stairs dressed in his sister's frock, and, passing him, get the roses, and, with them in her dainty hands, give him that first sweet innocent kiss. "Kitty! Kitty!" he cried aloud, "and I have killed you!"

He looked up. Giraud was looking at him with a strange and exalted expression. "Never think, dear friend, that I blame you! You only did what I should have done in your place. War is very well in time of action when one's blood is up; but oh! war, and the horrors of war in cold blood after the excitement of the combat is over, is very much like murder! You are my last link to friendship. All these letters you will give that worthy countryman of mine who would fain have rescued me. You could not aid him; no, like me, you value honour more than life. I have told my father that hand in hand we spend this last night of mine together, like the twin brothers we look. Will you, if you live, visit him? He will welcome you, never fear!"

"I will be as a son to him," answered Giraud fervently.

Shortly after, supper was brought in. "Eat," said Giraud, "we will both eat, and we will inaugurate the meal by a toast, 'To the noblest and bravest, be they French or English!' Did you hear anything? Look!" Jack looked in the direction where Giraud indicated, but could see nothing.

When he again faced the table, Giraud had poured out the wine, and was awaiting him to drink the toast.

Bowing to one another the two simultaneously repeated Giraud's toast, and both drained their glasses.

Jack sat down immediately after, saying, " I am ill, Giraud ! What have you done ? Drugged me ? Coward ! as though I could not face death ! " He gazed round him with amazed indifference, and fell into Giraud's arms.

Carrying him to his bed, Giraud sat by his side for half an hour. He then proceeded to undress, and when his outer garments were completely off, he undressed Jack, and carefully put on the unconscious man his own discarded uniform ; and when all was on and the transformation complete, he hurriedly attired himself in his prisoner's clothes, smiling with pleasure as he did so. He then poured out the contents of the two bottles of wine in a corner of the cell, throwing the bottles on the floor by the bedside, as though the sleeper had emptied them in order to drown his sorrows.

And then he, too, wrote a letter, a long letter of many closely written pages. He read it, and re-read it, and could see no fault in it or any need to change what was evidently to the writer explicit and clear. He folded it, and addressed it to the Marshal Bellais. He then knelt by Jack's bedside, and kneeling, slept.

The cold grey morning found the two men thus. At half-past five, footsteps were heard on the narrow stairway. The door of the cell was opened, and a sergeant entered. He looked with astonishment in the direction of the bed, but the prisoner he sought stood up before him, saying, " My friend, your Captain takes my release more to heart than I do ! " and, pointing to the bottles, " we all fail sometimes to do our duty. I am ready ! " Then, without another sign or look in the direction of the sleeping man, he took his place in the little procession, down the stairs, one by one, each step taking him nearer to death, across the barrack yard. Then down more steps until he came to a quadrangle where the soldiers told off to shoot him were awaiting him, indistinct in the cold misty October morning.

He counted his steps as he went, each taking him nearer to what he fervently believed to be everlasting

happiness. His eyes smiled, and his cheeks, flushed by the morning air, were mantled with unusual colour. "What a handsome man!" thought the men who escorted him. "Brave, the bravest of the brave!"

An officer advanced. "Will you have your eyes bandaged?" "No!" was the response, and with a joyous smile the English prisoner faced death.

"One! Two!" With these numbers came the sound of horses' hoofs, nearer, ever nearer, and not only horses' hoofs, but the stumbling feet of the drunken man, who, revived by the fresh air, had followed his prisoner and gained on the party. Both officer and men looked aside, as though unwilling to behold their comrade's folly. Staggering from side to side, uttering vague sounds, he tried to stop the firing, but he was too late! "Three!" and a cry of horror came from the lips of the rider whose imperious "Halt!" had been an instant too late.

Another cry came from the direction of the steps, as "Frère Christopher," taking advantage of the short cut, dashed across the quadrangle.

"In the name of the Emperor!" and Marshal Bellais waved a paper in his hand.

"Too late! Too late!" The firing party stood to arms, while the officer in command rushed forward and joined the Marshal, who was already bending over the prostrate bodies, for both Giraud and his prisoner lay on the ground. Bellais, with uncovered head, and anguish in his eyes, grasped "Frère Christopher" by the hand, as he almost shouted, "Too late! Too late! Dead! Look!" and, spurning the recumbent form of the supposed Giraud with his foot, "Arrest Captain Giraud!"

Rafferty bent over the dead man with feverish anxiety. "Master Jack!" he cried. "Master Jack!" and he tore open the blood-stained coat. "Dead! Dead! But," and his voice fuller and richer than ever shouted, "but it ain't Master Jack; it's the Frenchman!"

Yes! Giraud had given his life for his prisoner.

"What am I to do, sir? Look! he is our man!"

and Rafferty pointed to the insensible form the soldiers were vainly attempting to raise. Bellais knelt by the dead man, and a look of wondering admiration replaced the horror of a moment since, as in his heart came the conviction that above all men his countrymen were the bravest, and his beloved France the home of chivalry. Standing, he again waved his paper, and addressed those present.

"Soldiers, this paper contains a message from your Emperor. It is for the release of the prisoner. It arrived too late, but a soldier of France has given his life for the man to whom his Emperor has given freedom! Vive la France! The land of warriors and of heroes!" And the hero of a hundred fights laid his hand across his brow as, reverently, his old companions in arms lifted the body of their gallant comrade on a stretcher.

It was quite a week before Jack Woodruff recovered his reason, and then he found himself in a strange room, which, if not luxurious, was vastly superior to his prison cell. He looked round him with astonishment, and turned in the direction of the window. Two men were sitting by it—one a monk, the other an orderly. He called, and before the words had left his lips, both turned and came in the direction of his bed, and he recognized "Frère Christopher's" well-known face, sadder than he had ever seen it.

"Master Jack, sir!"

"Where am I, Rafferty? And what is it all about? Have I been dreaming? Tell me that it is a dream!"

Rafferty looked sadder than before, and said, "It ain't no use, sir! You've got to face duty, and that is to get well and start for home with me. The other, as is now a saint in Heaven, gave you your life, not for you, mind ye, but for her—Miss Kitty, your wife, and you would be just a-outraging of his memory if ye did not vally what he gave his life for—that's your life, as you ought to know, and not make a poor ignorant chap as the likes of me have to explain to ye. You're in the

Marshal's room, sir, and is tended by him as a brother."

"Leave me by myself, Rafferty. Come again, though, before long."

Left to himself, Jack reviewed the past. He saw it all clearly now. Giraud, dear brave Giraud, had meant to do it from the first. "He was to be as a son to father." Yes, Jack knew that he would be the hero of his brave old father's heart, ranking with Kitty, or Kitty's mother, for Jack knew the romantic adoration lavished by his father on the mother of his darling. Only his father would know about it, for Kitty could never be told. His boy—yes, Giraud had left a boy—well, he should be his son! And though his pillow was soaked with tears when Rafferty returned an hour or so after, he found his patient asleep, and not only asleep, but smiling in his sleep.

A stealthy step crossing the room caused him to look round. It was Marshal Bellais. He looked at the sleeper, and a keen observer would have noticed (as Rafferty did) a look almost of anguish on the Marshal's handsome face, so gentle now, with an even wistful expression round his mouth.

"Come," he said. "Come, he is all right now, and will be able to start in a day or two. Come, tell me more about her. Come!" And "Frère Christopher" (his rôle as a friar was still maintained to the general public) followed the Marshal into his cabinet.

When Rafferty, in his impotent madness, threw his Princess's portrait into his face, the Marshal, for a moment only, wondered if the lay brother could have intended taking his life. As he wondered, his eyes fell on the object thrown at him, and, seeing it to be the portrait of a child, he stooped and picked it up. Then it was his turn to become speechless, to be dazed. For some moments he saw and heard nothing, though he knew that a special messenger from the Emperor had entered the room and was waiting to give him the message he brought. He was aware, too, that the lay brother was on his feet again, hideous in his anguish, with froth still round his mouth, and eyes that looked at him with the imploring expression of a dog's.

"Whose portrait is this?" he cried; "tell me! Your life depends on it!"

"The prisoner's wife, Marshal! The prisoner's wife! Give him his life for her sake!" and the lay brother knelt before him.

"In the name of the Emperor"—mechanically Bellais took the despatch and read—"Release the prisoner. —Napoleon."

He shouted, "A horse! Your horse! We may save him yet!" and rushing down the stairs mounted the messenger's horse, and rode as he had never ridden before. But as he rode a child's face was before him—his lost darling's! For he, Pierre, had recognized her in the portrait painted by Romney from Jack's description of his Kitty on her first appearance in England. Yes, after long years he had found her; but not as a child, as another man's adored and adoring wife! Yes, Pierre Bellais knew that Jack Woodruff's wife was Gabrielle de Verminoux. A Frenchman, his own friend, had given his life for Jack Woodruff, and as Marshal Bellais stood with Soult by Giraud's open grave the wonder of it all came to him, for by that time he knew all that Rafferty could tell him. Over and over again did the rough Deal sailor recount all he knew of the strange adventures of the child who had been the listener's "Fairy Queen." Something even more enthralling to the talented boy who had watched and loved her from a baby, for it had been the only thing Pierre Bellais had understood in his mother, the only thing he shared with her; that intense love that dwarfed in the mother her natural affection for her own sons had been recognized by Pierre as not only natural, but quite what should be. He heard again and again of the passage from Havre to Deal; of the meeting with Admiral George; of the misunderstanding occasioned by the limited English spoken by the child; of the loss of that heroic sailor, and old Pierre's sudden death; and then—but this was the part of the story which seemed to interest Bellais more than any other incident of the child's life—of her illness, and the influence it still exercised over her. "Yes, Marshal," Rafferty

would say again and again, " it ain't many as knows it, but I am in the know ; a shock would kill her, or worse ! " Seeing a look of horror on the Marshal's face, " Yes, sir, kill her ! Our doctor said so from the first, he did, when she ran away and tried to walk over on the rocks, poor child, just because I said to her when she asked me so pretty like, ' What is that, Captain ? ' a-pointing to the French coastline, ' is that France ? '—I said yes. Well, she tried to walk across—there ! The French doctors say the same—no, not quite the same—they say she would lose her reason and then die. So she must be kept quiet-like, and is as happy as a bird with the best of husbands and a little girl, and loved as words of mine ain't powerful enough to express."

" I am going to keep the portrait until the Captain gives me one," said Bellais. " I would rather have one of so lovely a woman as she is now."

" You will get one, sir, never fear. Talk of her, please, to him, and tell him as how he should act. Lor' ! we ain't none of us up to the other chap, are we, sir ? "

Then the Marshal rose and shook Rafferty by the hand, and an unbroken silence reigned in the room.

The next day the Marshal heard Jack's story. Nothing but adoration had surrounded his master's lost child, only a change from one home to another. He meditated again and again on the impossibility of making his discovery known to his mother and the Duc, and the more he reflected the more certain he felt that the doctors, her husband (oh, how he winced !) and Rafferty were right. She was now well, happy, idolized in her English home, and it was his duty to leave her there. But he, Pierre, would see her there. Unknown to her, for fear of recognition, for she had loved him as a child. Yes ; he would go to Folkestone and be present at Jack's welcome home ! The *Princess Kitty* was to take them home—Rafferty and his guest. Unknown to Jack, he would go with them. He could take his secretary, and the time would not be lost. He communicated his intentions to Rafferty, who acquiesced with enthusiasm.

So when the *Princess Kitty* (again favoured by the most propitious breezes) spread her white wings in the direction of old England, her principal cabin was occupied by "certain gents as don't wish to be seen, as has done us a good turn, as must needs be treated civil." So Jack, who never for one moment imagined that his illustrious friend, Marshal Bellais, would take that route to France, was profoundly ignorant that he and his secretary were "the certain gents."

The voyage was uneventful. Hour after hour during the night Bellais walked the deck. Day by day his depression grew more profound. Something—had it been hope ?—had died away, and so soon would he see the star of his existence, another man's adored wife. They passed Dungeness, Hythe, Sandgate, and then, oh ! moment of delight !—Folkestone !

On the cliffs near the Church stood two men ; one on either side of a "sea-king," whose burly form more than filled his easy-chair. Wrapped in rugs, his stick by his side, Admiral Woodruff personally directed the look-out party, his spy-glass by his side. Both attendants were using theirs.

"Collins, my man, what's up ? Do you see something ? You generally do. Speak, man ! "

Collins, whose visible anxiety seemed to be growing more intense, moved a step nearer the edge of the cliff. He seemed, too, to quiver with excitement. A moment after, down went the telescope into the gorse bushes, and reckless of Admiral, reckless of duty, reckless of anything but his news, he rushed in the direction of a lady, who, with a little child, was nearing the party.

"Miss Kitty ! My darling Miss Kitty ! He's a-coming. Master Jack, your husband, is a-coming ! " Snatching up the little girl in his arms, he rushed back to his master, shouting, "You knowed it, Admiral ! You knowed it ! He's back all right, for I told that rascal Rafferty to fly a white ensign by the Jack when he come up Channel, and she's there, sir, she's there ! "

"Send for your mistress," roared the Admiral. "Why, you want more looking after than a ship full of bluejackets ! No ; I will stump home myself, no one

is to follow. I shall take the news myself!" And so he did. And no one knew how he told it.

Two hours after, Jack stood in his father's hall with all those he loved round him; and Kitty—radiant in her wedding-dress, put on at the earnest request of "father"—looked lovelier than ever, with an additional charm in her shy little daughter, who, hiding in the folds of her mother's train, peeped in and out of its welcome shelter at the "great big man" who knelt with open arms entreating kisses, which were as resolutely refused.

In all this excitement the Admiral had found time to speak to Rafferty, who, without giving details, intimated that one of those to whom Jack owed his life, and who, unknown to Master Jack, had returned on the *Princess Kitty* with him, would land, or had landed, and all he wanted was to have a look at "Miss Kitty," not to speak to her, but just to have a look in, say at a "winder," and that very evening too, as he was to cross the Channel that night if the wind held fair. "We've got a pass," and he winked at the Admiral, who tried not to understand. "If so be as they took one of those wire blinds down in the smoking-room, Admiral, that would do the job; and light the candles; me and my mate, well, we would look in!"

And so it was arranged. Collins broke a blind, and lit the candles, and then the Admiral suggested that as Jack looked pale he should lie on the sofa in the smoking-room and get a nap, in order to be quite fresh for the supper to be given in the servants' hall. "And Kitty, my dear, you and Catherine can take care of him."

Half an hour afterwards two men crossed the Churchyard and walked in the direction of No 4. A bright light streamed from one of the lower windows. The taller of the men approached that window and looked in, and then remained motionless as if spellbound. Unseen by the occupants of the smoking-room, in the space of five minutes Pierre Bellais was initiated into the perfect bliss of Jack's wedded happiness. He lay sleeping on the sofa, but it was no cushion on which his head rested, for Kitty, smiling, happy Kitty, with one taper finger raised to her lips as though admonishing

little Catherine, who, surrounded with her toys, was playing on the floor, sat at the further end of the sofa, and had cushioned her husband's head in her lap. The filmy lace of her train fell in snowy folds on the floor; the genial blaze of the coal fire cast dazzling gleams on the soft sheen of the white satin dress, and threw up the delicate features of the tender loving face that in an ecstasy of affection bent over the sleeping form of one who had been brother, playmate, hero, lover, husband—the one and only love of her life.

The man at the window, from some contraction in his throat, coughed, and then Kitty turned to the window, and the watcher saw her full face. He breathed with difficulty—it was anguish—but, as he looked, he wondered, not at the classical loveliness of the woman on whose beauty he was gazing, but at the perfect health that mantled her cheeks, for the French lily had indeed blossomed into an English rose. As he watched, Jack turned and murmured something, and then—no! it was too much! for, untrammelled by modern corsets, Kitty with the grace of a Diana kissed her Endymion! And then the watcher, reckless of his companion's stumbling gait, fled from the window, rushed down the High Street, and never relaxed his speed until the Old Harbour was reached. A boat from the *Princess Kitty* was waiting for them. But in the silence of the dark November evening poor Rafferty's shuffles could be plainly heard following.

On joining the Marshal, Rafferty looked at him, wondering as he did so at his pallor; for the moonlight, unobscured by houses, showed up every ripple on the dancing sea.

"Sir!" he said, "sir!"

"Yes!" gasped the man he addressed. "Yes, she is happy! But I, man," here he grasped Rafferty by the arm and shook him in his emotion—"I could have given her a throne!" And before Rafferty could recover his shaken senses, the noise of oars told him that his noble friend had bid farewell to old England, and was already on the sea.

Later on, up and down the deck, with feverish energy,

strode Pierre Bellais. The night darkened, the wind freshened, and then the sky grew grey. With morning came the coast of France. Then Bellais stood still, and, stretching out his arms in the direction of his native land, cried, "France, dear France, you have now no rival! I am yours for ever and ever!"

CHAPTER XXII

FOLKESTONE IN 1856

Be happy!
Let all the number of the stars give light
To thy fair way!

—*Shakespeare.*

YEARS have passed by, nearly half a century, since we saw Kitty reunited to her husband; years fraught with much that was glorious to England; years that gave liberally, though taking with them in their never-ceasing course much that was noble and worthy of repute. For a new order of things has succeeded the old. The past has been voted dull, and a spirit of discontent is asserting itself; even the artistic furniture of the eighteenth century has been condemned as out of date, and, when not sold, is stored away in attics, for we are now in the early Victorian period.

Nowhere was this change more noticeable than in Folkestone, that home of old mariners. In lieu of the quaint old seafaring town, slowly but surely was arising a modern watering-place. Where peaceful meadows formerly looked skywards, squares and terraces have been built. The Leas have been turned into a public promenade, and a few houses have already robbed them of some of their natural charms. Sadder still, the old inhabitants have become inoculated with the fever of unrest and, with a few exceptions, have quitted the old dwellings that had housed their forefathers for more pretentious modern residences.

Among the dear old Folkestonians who viewed with dismay the changes round her was Lady Woodruff. Her life since we last saw her has been singularly uneventful.

In the natural troubles, the unavoidable separations, the temporary—thank God! only temporary—partings with those, who full of years and honours, had rejoined their little daughter, Kitty had acquiesced, for was not Jack at her side to comfort and console?

"Dear father is never far from me," was Kitty's whispered confidence to her husband, and Jack, knowing his father's views of the communion of those who have "crossed over," answered, "I am sure that is so, my darling! You must give me a double share of love now!" And Kitty, comforted, had done as Jack wished.

Mrs. Woodruff did not live long after the death of the Admiral, and for many years Sir John and Lady Woodruff reigned in their stead, the admiration of the whole country-side. No troubles came to them. Even the marriage of their only child to a Frenchman had been a subject of congratulation, for, interviewed by the Mayor himself, who was delegated by the whole population of Folkestone, Jack, in answer to a fervid appeal to his patriotism and the memory of his distinguished father, had answered with unaffected surprise, "My father object! Why he would give Catherine away himself if he could. My future son-in-law's father was the bravest of the brave!" After this response further arguments would have been futile, so the worthy Mayor beat a retreat, and on his rejoining his fellow townsmen informed them "That it was no good! Better give a present and be done with it! There might be worse husbands than Frenchmen, though he, for one, did not think so."

So the whole town went to the wedding, and the young members of the community thought it a fine show. But the middle-aged compared it with that of Lady Woodruff and, while sagely arguing that comparisons were odious, shrugged their shoulders at the difference.

When the wedding was over, and the young couple quietly settled at Rouen, Jack and Kitty were left alone in the old home, and, oh! the wedded bliss that knew no change or variation in that happy home! The years passed, bringing no sorrows but the shadows cast by those borne by others. They were even reconciled to the absence of grandchildren, for the Admiral's words

had proved prophetic—Jack was indeed the last of the Woodruffs.

But in all homes the day must dawn when one only is left, and that day had come and gone six months before the date on which we rejoin our heroine. Yes, Jack has joined all those who had welcomed the wandering child, and now she lives alone in the old house in Church Street. We will look in on her in the drawing-room and observe the changes time and solitude have effected.

There is no change in the arrangement of the furniture, or in the pictures in which Romney and Lawrence immortalized "the Children of the House," who, smiling in their youthful beauty, seemed to look lovingly on the old lady who sits opposite her husband's portrait. "That there is nothing so beautiful as a young lady but an old lady" is a well-known aphorism, and one which applies to Kitty, for her beauty has only aged. She does not look unhappy, nor is she. Jack always kept his word, so what was there to be unhappy about? And he was coming so soon. And every hour of the day Lady Woodruff thought of her husband's last words—words that no one else had heard, or been told about, the last of those wedded confidences that began in the vestry when they whispered to one another of their wedding bells, and ended when the bridegroom lay dying: "Don't grieve, my darling! Be brave, I shall come for you soon; never fear, I shall come for you soon!" and then he was dead.

Jack would keep his word, he always did. So his wife did as he wished; she was brave, she did not grieve, and people wondered as the uninitiated will. But while waiting for that happy moment Kitty occupied herself in doing all that Jack used to do. It was quite hard work for her, so many letters to write, and so many old pensioners to interview. "You take his place mighty well, my lady, that you do!" was the daily acknowledgment to her success. And Kitty, so stately to equals, or would-be equals, so simple and gracious to those that the accident of birth had placed beneath her, clasped the speaker's hands, and smiling with pleasure, would answer, "Thank you! Thank you! If he could hear you——"

And the sailors, his old shipmates, would, with moistened eyes, express their conviction that he did.

At the express wish of her husband, Lady Woodruff did not wear a cap ; she had never been allowed in his lifetime to cover her luxuriant hair with anything so hideous. So the curls we know so well have but changed from gold to silver. As we watch her she gets up, and going to the window opens it and walks into the garden.

The July sun was bright, and the garden was ablaze with flowers, for though the old favourites were not discarded, geraniums, calceolarias, heliotropes and verbenas were blooming gaily. Though Lady Woodruff looked at these modern innovations with evident pleasure, she did not bend to gather any, but passing the flower beds went to a corner near the summer-house and stopped before an old, but apparently much-cared-for, China rose bush. From this she gathered a bunch of roses and kissed them before arranging them on the bosom of her dress. While doing so, she heard voices, and turning walked hurriedly to meet the little group advancing in her direction. It consisted of three men ; two were men-servants, for as in the old time Kitty had always in a sense an establishment of her own, so it had remained. There was the house butler and Lady Woodruff's attendant ; nothing ever changed at No. 4. When Sinclair and Collins were " promoted," as the Admiral said, two other old sailors took their places ; the two men now in the employ of Lady Woodruff had served under her husband, and were devoted to their mistress.

On the arm of Hewitt, Lady Woodruff's attendant, tottered a pensioner, a man, judging from his countenance, considerably over eighty years of age. He leant heavily on Hewitt's arm, and chatted garrulously as he walked along. Miles, the butler, carried a tray with a churchwarden pipe, a newspaper, a cut-glass spirit decanter, and a tumbler and jug of water upon it. With a flutter of pleasure Lady Woodruff advanced to meet her visitor ; as she did so, with the bunch of roses in her hands, the old man after looking at her with delight burst into tears, and piteously asked " to be let alone, as he knowed he was a bit childish."

"Never mind, Pilcher, never mind; you will soon be yourself again!" said Lady Woodruff.

"Ah, ah! Miss Kitty, but I'm not the man I was! I ain't up to much now. I shall soon be afloat with the Admirals! I'm tired of port, I are. Every night I says the same prayer, I do—'Lord, take me soon to my old shipmates!' But if I bide a while and chat, maybe I shall feel myself a man again."

At a sign from their mistress the two menservants returned to the house, leaving the old friends together. Pilcher watched their departure with the wariness of the old, and when quite certain of being unheard, he turned to his hostess and addressed her.

"You can't guess, your ladyship, why I forgot myself just now? I'll tell ye, and perhaps you'll understand me—I saw ye again as a little lass!"

"Me as a little lass, Pilcher! Now tell me all about it."

"And Master Jack too! Oh! Master Jack!" and the old man looked skywards. "I had come back with him and your father, miss; I was in the pantry with Collins when a knock came at the door, a grand knock like. He gave a mighty start, did Collins, and went out a-leaving the door ajar, and I slipped into the hall with him, a-thinking as it might be footpads. I was only a lad then, four years older than Master Jack. Well, I see your ladyship, such a little lass, dressed like a gipsy lass, you were." Lady Woodruff's eyes dilated with surprise. "And Collins, he goes to the dining-room door and throws it wide open, he does, and says something as I can't remember, and then you——"

Lady Woodruff looked all attention. "And what happened next, Pilcher?"

"What happened next? Why, Master Jack—I see him now with his arm in a sling and a bunch of them there roses in his hand from that there same bush over there. I tell ye, ha! ha! he were handsome, he were, as handsome as brave, and you, my lady, your little face was dirty like with crying at saying good-bye to your pa. Well, you come forward like and says—like Miss Kitty, Master Jack's own sister used to say—you know, my lady,

the little girl that died as is buried over there," he pointed in the direction of the churchyard, "'I am Kitty, an English girl! God bless King George!' King George was on the throne then, not the young lass as is now, as I only wish I were man enough to fight for. Well, when you said that in your pretty way as was not English like as we talk in Folkestone, Master Jack, what does he do, my lady, what does he do? Why he comes forward like with his face all aglow and throws them ere roses all at your feet, an' he loved you then, my lady, as never a lass was loved afore or since. I ain't never told you afore 'cause they wouldn't let me. And you! well they washed ye and dressed ye in the little dead gal's things, and as ye came down them stairs"—he pointed to the house—"we was all a-watching for ye in the hall." Elevating his voice with excitement, "You was a princess! But you did not look at us, lor, you did not see us; your little head was in the air, so high did you carry it! But you saw him, my lady lass, ye saw Master Jack as loved ye from the first, and ye went to them roses as the Frenchy, your Frenchy, had put on a little table nigh, and ye took them in yer little hands as were brown but lovely, and ye went to him, my lady lass, and stood tiptoe aside him; and Master Jack, why he bent his head a bit, and ye put your little arms around his neck so loving like, and holding them there, roses in one hand, ye joined the other to it, but round his neck, my lady lass, round his neck, and ye kissed him, ye did, and then—why, we all loved ye, and we've loved ye ever since! Sometimes I've said to Master Jack—Sir John as come to be, but not to me though—I says to Master Jack, 'Sir, ye say, sir, as she come from the skies; I say no, Sir, right away from Heaven, sir! Oh, you was a lovely lass! If those days would come back again! Oh, Master Jack, why was I not took and you left with your sweetheart?" And the old man cried so piteously that it was with difficulty that Lady Woodruff could induce him to smoke his pipe and listen while she read aloud to him.

After a quiet smoke, and a stiff glass of rum and water, Pilcher became quite himself again, and encouraged by this evident return to reason Lady Woodruff asked him

who and what the Frenchy was; and where he came from, and where did he go, as she could remember nothing about him, which was much to be wondered at as she had such a good memory and could remember everything she did as a child, even the dresses she wore. But her questions were useless; the old man looked at her in terror, and told her that neither his brain nor tongue were to be trusted. "I am nothing but an old clacker now! Frenchy! As if the Admiral would have one across his doorstep as had passed his life a-fighting of 'em! You ain't to take no account of what an old fool says, your ladyship." And then he cried again, and Lady Woodruff rang a little hand-bell which summoned Hewitt, who shortly after conducted the old pensioner to his home, which was situated at the bottom of High Street. However, before leaving the hall, while Hewitt was getting his hat, the old man managed to totter to the smoking-room, at the door of which he knocked. He listened patiently, but hearing no welcome "Come in," opened it and said timidly, "Don't be hard on me, Master Jack, as has let out more than he should. I'm an old man now, sir, as is a child once more! Perhaps as no harm will come of it."

He was looking dazed when Hewitt found him there, so much so that the latter shook his head sagely on his return from High Street, and announced in the servants' hall that "Sir Jack's old chum would soon join him."

But seated in the drawing-room, Lady Woodruff wondered and wondered why Jack had never told her about the roses, for she felt sure that that part of the story must be true. It made her head ache to wonder, so she put her hand to her head, but the sound of voices in the hall changed the thread of her thoughts.

An instant after the door opened, and a charming voice said "Mamma!"

"Catherine! Catherine! this is a surprise!" said her mother. "You have come at a most fortunate moment, for I was feeling rather lonely." And mother and daughter kissed one another over and over again.

"Léon thought I should come for a day or two," said Madame Giraud, "and he says that you must return

with me. Dear father, if you remember, promised to bring you himself this summer, so if you won't come at your own wish you must carry out his promise to dear Léon. If you do pay us this long promised visit, we are to return with you and will remain until the New Year."

Lady Woodruff looked strangely at her daughter, and said in a rather changed voice, "Catherine, I shall be pleased, darling, to see your home. I am not afraid of anything now. I was always afraid of losing something before—I have nothing to lose now!"

But while her maid was dressing her for dinner in the black satin dress her husband loved to see her in, Lady Woodruff remembered that once she was dressed "like a gipsy lass," and what was more wonderful still she thought she remembered the dress, it was brown she felt sure. But her head began to ache again, and she wisely left off thinking.

It was nothing in the good old days for the gentlemen of No. 4 to be packing, for they were always on the move; but it was otherwise with the ladies, and—it will hardly be believed in these modern days—Kitty had only left her home twice before! The first occasion was when as a bride she spent a week at Sandgate, the second when she visited Lady Radnor in order to be presented at court.

Feeling quite unable to give any directions, she acquiesced in her usual dignified manner, and let those who were accustomed to travelling do everything that was necessary.

She was, indeed, full of her own occupations. The old pensioners had to receive a fortnight's supply of Sir John's bequests—the hall and smoking-room were never vacant. Lady Woodruff's cheeks were pink with excitement, and called forth many compliments from her husband's old friends, men who had known her from a child.

Once during the day Lady Woodruff looked unhappy, and her face wore the perplexed look so dreaded in her youth by Collins and her husband. That was when Hewitt informed her that Pilcher was unable to pay his

daily visit, and that his granddaughter had sent for Dr. Slateman (the son of the Woodruff's old doctor), who thought there was but little chance of his getting up again. On hearing this, Lady Woodruff sent for her hat in order to pay the invalid a visit, but before the message was given the doctor came in to wish her " bon voyage " and give her a professional opinion of old Pilcher.

" There is no hope, Kitty," he said—they were old friends, those two. " No hope, and I think you will be wiser not to disturb him by going to see him. He rambles, poor old chap, and talks foolishly—may I ask you to stay away ? "

But Dr. Slateman was not prepared for the look that his old friend gave him. He stayed on some time chatting on the possible adventures of his hostess. After bidding good-bye, he remembered that he had a word or two to say to Hewitt, and went to the pantry. He looked the man full in the face, and said, " Do you think that old Pilcher rambled of the past when he was here yesterday ? "

" I can't say for certain, sir, but he may have done. Anyway, her ladyship ain't none the worse for it," was the man's answer.

" You think so, Hewitt ? You are on the spot and should know."

The day passed very agreeably, and the servants heard with pleasure the voice of their mistress laughing and talking. A few old friends came in to tea, and then night fell. The trunks were packed, for the next day Lady Woodruff was to leave for France.

On the eventful morning she did not quite realize that it was possible that it could be true, and really felt very unhappy. She walked round her garden (Madame Giraud watched her from an upstairs window) bidding farewell to favourite spots—the tree where her swing used to hang ; the summer-house where Jack frightened her so when he poured out his confession of love ; Ponto's grave. All the old associations of her youth came back, and so did old Pilcher's narrative, and his description of her on her first arrival—" dressed like a gipsy lass." Why should she, Catherine Woodruff, the only daughter

of an Admiral, have been dressed like a gipsy? And the Frenchy! She gasped with the pain in her head, and went into the house.

After a quiet early dinner they dressed her—I write they dressed her, for it is literally true. Every woman in the house gathered into or outside Lady Woodruff's bedroom. The cook, a stout woman of quite sixty, would let no one else touch her mistress, though she allowed minors to hand her gloves, etc.; and it was, "You won't be away long, my lady? Not that you need worry over us, but the place will be no place without you. Holidays, indeed! I shan't as much as look out of the place while you are away—I'll give the girls a few days though."

And then they all went downstairs together, and Lady Woodruff passed through the hall, servants and old friends on either side. She bore up wonderfully well, but then public functions had always been so natural to her. To a chorus of "Come back soon, my lady," and with her eyes blinded with tears, our Kitty drove down Church Street. She never looked back, but clasped her daughter's hand so firmly that the latter winced with pain.

On arriving at the Harbour (not the old stone harbour built by the mariners of Folkestone two centuries before, but a new structure erected at the same time as the Pavilion Hotel, the Clock House, and Pier, for the convenience of continental traffic) our travellers found quite a crowd round the gangway that led to the packet boat. The Mayor was there unofficially, but deputed by his fellow townsmen; the Vicar, Mr. Woodward, whose gentle voice and unaffected piety had been so helpful to his aged parishioner during the first few weeks of her loneliness; the Harbour-Master; old pensioners without number; and last, but not least, the Commandant from Shorncliffe, an old friend of the Woodruffs who, with sad lack of tact, entreated Lady Woodruff, "as they were now our brothers in arms, not to take the French by storm as she had done the English on her first appearance in Folkestone."

This remark passed seemingly unnoticed at the time,

for so many were talking and shaking hands, but for all that it did not pass unobserved by our heroine.

The Mayor and Commandant conducted Lady Woodruff on board, and remained by her side until the bell rang. A minute after, and the steamer glided from the quay, and Kitty, holding her daughter by the hand, gazed with sad eyes on the faces of her old friends looking down upon her. She gave a little gasp and sat down, and though Catherine waved her handkerchief, Lady Woodruff made no sign.

When she did look up again her eyes rested on the tower of Folkestone Church, not then hidden behind that awful enormity of many storeys which has robbed the queen of watering-places of her crowning beauty. The farther the shore receded the statelier grew the old church, now completely seen. Suddenly a flag was run up, and then lowered half-mast; the captain came forward saying, "Another of our heroes gone, my lady."

"Yes," she answered. "Poor Pilcher! He was both at Aboukir Bay and Trafalgar; my husband said that he had saved many a gun for England." As Pilcher's old friend said this, clearly and solemnly the passing bell rang out across the water.

But the depression caused by this incident was not of long duration. Lady Woodruff was soon chatting of the pleasure in store for her, and the little trip her son-in-law was to take her into the vine-growing provinces. At this Madame Giraud joined in the conversation, and told the Captain of the wonderful old lady they were to visit, a friend of her husband's. "Years older than you are, mamma; why she must be considerably over ninety, ninety-six I should think."

"I shall be happy to make her acquaintance, Catherine," said her mother, "though I, for one, cannot think such a long life a cause for congratulation. Still, she may not have lost all she loves on earth, contemporaries, I mean, my dear; the young, it is understood, should survive their parents."

"But, mamma, 'la mère Bellais,' as she is called all over France, has lived for something, and that is the cause, Léon says, of her wonderful vitality. She does

not look more than sixty, and is almost worshipped by the military. Seven of her sons have been soldiers, and the eldest was a Marshal of France. But I cannot tell you all her story now. My father-in-law served under the Marshal in Spain, and after his death—you remember papa telling us of his death, and what a hero he was—the Marshal, unknown to his mother, or any one in fact, paid all Léon's expenses when at school. She is a regular old aristocrat, and thinks poor Léon very common."

Lady Woodruff looked very happy. "Catherine," she said, "I have never been so happy since your dear papa left me. I am glad that I am carrying out his wishes, though how I left my home I cannot understand." Then she closed her eyes and fell asleep.

Her daughter left her for perhaps ten minutes to talk to a fellow traveller; when she returned she found her mother had quitted her seat and was standing by the Captain looking at the sea. She was singing softly to herself. Captain Boscar was listening with delight; he put his finger to his lips to entreat silence, and together they listened to the remainder of the song. Lady Woodruff was singing "Black-eyed Susan," and, what was stranger still, she was, for her, angry when she became aware that she had an audience, and a furtive look came into her eyes.

CHAPTER XXIII

AT VERMINOUX ONCE MORE

Welcome ever smiles, and farewell goes out sighing.
—Troilus and Cressida.

MANY a truth is spoken in jest, and the Commandant's warning to spare the feelings of our brave allies in the sense he intended was unwittingly ignored by his charming old friend. For, from the porter who directed Hewitt to the railway carriage, and who with astonished countenance helped to arrange the usual trifles on the luggage rack, to a group of officers who were watching the disembarking of the travellers, and who promptly went on board and asked the Captain the name and station of his late passenger, there was but one verdict: "Quelle grande dame! Comme elle est belle!" And this homage to Lady Woodruff's personal charms was further augmented by her dignity of manner, for on hearing that she was the widow of such a distinguished Admiral as Sir John Woodruff, the officers before mentioned thought it incumbent on their national politeness, just before the departure of the train, to pass before the window from which the object of their admiration was looking with vivacious delight at all that was going on, and, standing in a row, to bow and salute. Quite unconsciously Lady Woodruff stood up, and drawing herself to her full height, made one of her stately curtsies. Before the spectators had recovered from their surprise the train was in motion.

The officers gathered round a local magnate to discuss, as men will, the beautiful woman, and to assert that

"after all an English 'grande dame' was a 'grande dame'!" To which he responded, "Mais bien-sûr, mes amis, mais bien sûr! Pourquoi pas? Elles sont charmantes, toutes! Ces belles Anglaises!"

But going back to their caserne, one, a keener observer than the rest, said, "That was no English grande dame, but une dame de l'ancienne régime, and one that must have been brought up at Versailles. Her face, too, is familiar to me."

And for his remarks he was laughed to scorn by his comrades.

Our travellers stayed one night at Amiens, and Madame Giraud was surprised at the interest shown by her mother in everything she saw, and at her aptness in understanding, or seeming to understand, what was said around her. Hewitt, though in France for the first time, was no novice at travelling, but the maid, Martha's successor, required to be looked after by the whole party.

The journey to Rouen was taken in the large private carriage lent to M. Giraud for his expedition to the west of France. This long drive to the old capital of Normandy was most enjoyable, and, when at length an inmate of her daughter's house, what wonders were to be seen! For twenty-five years Catherine had written to her mother weekly, and in those letters had given many descriptions; but descriptions, however graphic, are nothing to personal inspections, and every detail of her daughter's house was looked at and admired by Lady Woodruff.

M. Giraud, as a member of the Archæological Society of his department, was no inefficient guide to his native city, and not a building or locality of interest was neglected; and when early in August the time came for the party to start on their trip, it was with regret that Lady Woodruff bade *au revoir* to dear Rouen. She had scored triumphs there too, and excited wondering interest by attending a *bal de bienfaisance* given in aid of the widows and children of soldiers who had lost their lives in the Crimea.

Catherine in the privacy of her own room had shed tears of indignation at what she thought her mother's

want of reverence to her father's memory. "I could not have believed it of mamma, Léon!" she cried; "do use your influence!"

To which Léon had answered, "I will explain your position to the Préfet, and he will to others. But, Catherine, remember your father's wishes—your mother was not to grieve."

But Jack's daughter was obdurate; though she dared not express her disapproval to her mother, she assumed indifference by refusing to assist Martha, or even to look at her when dressed for the entertainment. Pleading a violent headache, she locked herself in her room.

"Catherine, I assure you that you will regret this," said her husband. "Do come down, if only for an instant; your mother is as happy as a child, and looks—why adjectives fail me!"

But Catherine refused to be comforted, and sent her love.

With a Frenchman's natural adaptability, Léon Giraud endeavoured to look and act as though accustomed to conduct great ladies to public functions. He sat opposite his mother-in-law as they drove to ——. She reproved him for this tacit acknowledgment of his inferiority, and even teased him by saying, "Léon, you are growing too portly to sit by a mother-in-law!"

As M. Giraud had informed the Préfet that Lady Woodruff intended going to the ball, he, with one or two officials, was awaiting her arrival near the entrance of the ball-room, and when, leaning on his arm, our heroine's stately head was distinguished passing through the doorway, the orchestra struck up the English National Anthem, which was received with enthusiasm by the assembled guests, who wonderingly looked at the English woman whose presence called forth this compliment, and murmurs of admiration could be heard on either side, as the Préfet passed up the room. Lady Woodruff's curtsy filled the bystanders with astonishment, and then her affability, her smiles—each "a caress," was the poetical definition given of their charm. On reaching the top of the room Lady Woodruff was given a place of honour by the side of Madame la Pré-

fête, and introduced to one or two members of the old régime, whose change of politics permitted them to be present at a Bonapartist gathering. Though Lady Woodruff could not speak a word of French, and her name and title were English, the representatives of royal France claimed her at once as their own, and regardless of the fact of her presence, notified to one another the obvious certainty, and the impossibility of their being deceived. One old Marquise, celebrated for her many wiles, sent for her husband, who after admiring the "belle of the evening" had retired to the card-room—he had been a noted dancer in his time—and ordered him then and there to invite the English lady to dance a *menuet-à-la-cour*. He did so, and with a sharp flutter of her fan, the Marquise saw and heard the "demande" accepted as though quite a matter of course.

Only too pleased at this proof of amiability on the part of the "old noblesse," the Préfet sent a message to the orchestra, and on the termination of the valse then being danced, it played Mozart's celebrated minuet from *Don Juan*. The company divided into two long lines, leaving the centre of the room clear. With her accustomed ease of manner Lady Woodruff danced, and having on this occasion a partner trained as she had been, excelled herself. Then the representatives of old France gathered round her and wondered even more. Cards had no longer any charms for the Marquis, who vainly attempted to find out where and when *milady* had learned to dance. And in default of answers more intelligible than smiles, he volunteered to inform those sitting near him that his late vis-à-vis had been instructed by the same master as he, for he had, on perceiving her proficiency, introduced one or two movements only taught by the "Maïtre-de-la-Cour." On hearing that the object of their wonder was the mother-in-law of "le bon Giraud," fans were fluttered, eyes elevated, and shoulders shrugged, and memories of the Revolution invoked.

On returning to his Château, the Marquis, who had been deep in thought, said, "Leave it to me, Adéle" (the wily Marquise answered to that name); "I will find

out in time, ma chérie. The lady reminds me of one my father loved, and I feel convinced that I can show you a portrait that may assist us in clearing up this great lady's identity."

The next morning was spent by this old couple in looking through cabinets and bureaus; at last their efforts were crowned with success, for in a faded velvet case they came upon a portrait painted on ivory. They both ejaculated "C'est elle! Ce n'est pas possible! Mais c'est bien vrai!" For, with the portrait of the Duchess de Verminoux in their hands, the Marquis and Marquise de Caux had recognized her daughter, the missing Gabrielle de Verminoux!

Later in the afternoon their carriage stopped before the door of "Sans Souci," the villa residence of the Girauds, but on asking for the ladies of the house the Marquis was informed that M. and Mme. Giraud with the Lady Woodruff and her attendants had left for the western provinces en route for Verminoux, where M. Giraud was to visit his old friend, the mother of "La gloire de la France," the Marshal Bellais. The Marquis, who was a Frenchman, though a noble, smiled at the evident antagonism on the part of Giraud's valet-de-chambre to a supposed legitimist, and wished him "good-day." On regaining their carriage the old courtiers agreed to wait the natural course of events, and proposed, as was their right, to be the first to congratulate their friend, the Duc, on his re-union with his lost sister.

It is not necessary to dilate upon the many pleasant days, nor the charms of the scenery through which our travellers passed on this excursion, one that had been looked forward to for so long by M. Giraud; but we may rest assured that nothing was omitted that could give pleasure to his companions.

Lady Woodruff was the gayest of the party. "Your mother has all the vivacity of a child, Catherine," was the constant remark of M. Giraud; to which his wife invariably made the same reply: "Mamma is too excited, Léon. Remember, you do not know her so well as I do."

They stayed two days at Orleans, and it was there

that Madame Giraud noticed a further change; her mother's excitement was varied by fits of vagueness that could not be defined as low spirits. At times she seemed to lose the certainty of things, and her thoughts would wander. Once her daughter, who was getting quite alarmed, could have been certain that she heard her mother answer a *femme de chambre* in French. But these fits of depression were transient; it seemed almost as if Lady Woodruff were aware of them and dreaded their being remarked upon by her daughter. In self-defence, she sought the society of her son-in-law, and often, during the time spent in Orleans, Catherine found herself ignored by her mother. She confided these apprehensions to her husband, who laughed at her fears and, manlike, wondered "why his wife was not more like her mother."

It was in the early evening, at the moment when the shadows lengthen, and the sun, though still brilliant, is enveloped in a golden haze, that the carriage belonging to our party emerged from the forest through which it had been passing, and under whose welcome and perfumed shade its occupants had been sheltering from the midday heat, for the day had been sultry. Glimpses of cool, and evidently frequented, footpaths cut through the dense undergrowth called forth much admiration, and had tempted Lady Woodruff and M. Giraud again and again to explore their seeming mysteries. These walks had caused an hour or two's delay, and would preclude all possibility of M. Giraud paying his visit of ceremony to his father's old friend on the evening of his arrival at her village home. But, as he cheerily remarked, "What is an extra day or two? There is nothing like enjoying the pleasures that we have in hand, and who knows but that it may rain when we return? So, amusez-vous bien, chères amies!" and, nothing loth, Lady Woodruff wandered under the pine trees. She was walking when they left the forest; Hewitt and Martha were some distance behind her. The carriage stopped on the outskirts; the coachman was waiting patiently for the pedestrians, when Madame Giraud, who, lost in reverie, had not left her seat, was

surprised at being addressed by him. "Regardez, madame!" Madame Giraud looked up hurriedly. Standing before a Calvaire, picturesquely situated on the border of the forest, she saw her mother, as though spell-bound. She called to Hewitt, but before he had time to answer she, too, was at the Calvaire. She put her hand upon her mother's arm. The contact of her daughter's hand called back Lady Woodruff to the present; she shook it off angrily, saying, "Catherine, you never leave me alone one moment!"

"But, mother, I thought you——" she did not know how to continue, her mother's eyes looked so fierce—"were surprised at seeing anything so realistic."

"That was it, Catherine, my dear, I was surprised, and"—she too seemed to search for words—"and almost frightened. What a strange way of recalling 'Our blest Redeemer.' I dare say this is a frequented spot; remark how carefully it is looked after; that bunch of flowers is quite fresh. And do notice, you will not find a weed near. There is an inscription on it; will you read it?" Madame Giraud read out, translating as she did so, "To the memory of the brave children of Verminoux."

"It is to the memory of our brave soldiers who fought against England in the war of Independence," said M. Giraud, who had now joined them. "As you say, chère belle-mère, this Calvaire is much frequented."

Lady Woodruff walked to the carriage, and shortly after regained her usual affectionate manner.

Only once more did she surprise her daughter by anything peculiar, and that was when they came to cross-roads, and there was a discussion as to which was the most direct to the village. Lady Woodruff joined in, and again she lost her temper. She asserted that the coachman and Léon were wrong, and that they would lose their way did they not take the road to which she pointed. Seeing her look really angry, M. Giraud said to the coachman: "Appear not to understand what I say, and tell Madame why you do not take the road she wishes; she understands some French."

The man bowed respectfully, and said slowly, "Madam

will pardon me when I tell her that the road she wishes me to take does not lead to the village, but to the Château."

Lady Woodruff was too agitated to understand what the man said, and remarked to her son-in-law, "Before long you will find that you are mistaken."

But when they had driven some distance, and had slowly ascended a hill, on the summit of which the tired horses rested to take breath, lo! the coachman clapped his hand on his thigh and cried, "But the lady was right!" for behind them, on the side of the opposite chain of hills, was the village to which they were bound.

"How beautiful! Why, Léon, you never told me that I was to see a toy village, the type of village described in fairy stories, but it's perfect! Mother, do look!"

But Lady Woodruff, cold and indifferent, took no interest in anything but the fact of her having been right, and the folly of disregarding her advice.

Ample amends having been made, the horses' heads were turned in the right direction. It was late, and the sun was setting. Perfect quiet reigned everywhere; a drowsy humming of insects foretold continued fine weather, and an occasional call from some isolated farm made the universal peace more apparent. Soothed by the prevailing calm, Lady Woodruff gave those round her her usual caressing smile, and gently asked her children to forgive her for her irritability.

She had barely finished speaking, when clearly across the valley sounded the *Angelus*. She put her hand to her head and burst into tears, crying, "Catherine, oh! Catherine, why is your father not with me? I want him more than ever now, for everything is going away from me, I shall never go home again!"

She was again re-assured as to the certainty of "dear papa's being pleased at her giving Léon the pleasure of her company," and with the same rapid change from tears to smiles, reminding M. Giraud, who was poetical, of the varied sunshine and rain of an April day, Lady Woodruff smiled again on those "who were left to her." So when at last they did drive up the village street, they were all in the best of spirits.

The church doors stood open, and, with the curiosity

of strangers and Protestants, both ladies tried in vain as they passed to get a glimpse of the interior. They did not see much, but Lady Woodruff, who, after her experiences at Rouen, was quite aware of the locality of the Lady Chapel, remarked on the number of candles that were burning round the statue of the Blessed Virgin.

"They are evidently pious here," was her comment. "To-morrow, dear, we will visit the church; it seems very handsome, and I think I noticed a fine monument."

A minute after, the carriage stopped before a picturesque old Inn. As the French say, it was now Madame Giraud's moment, for without an instant's hesitation she exclaimed, "Here we are at the real auberge of a ballet at the 'Grand Opéra', mother! and you are 'la première danseuse'! But where is the wicked fairy, or the fairy lover? Léon, you are too fat for any rôle!"

Her mother was so delighted at this flight of fancy on the part of her usually quiet daughter, that while admiring the quaintness of the Inn she did not look around her, but walked briskly up the steps and was escorted to her apartments by the host, who was as elaborate in manner as his Inn was picturesque. Martha, who had now shaken off her incapacity and had become quite sharp, dressed her mistress very quickly in the black satin dress she usually wore, but as the evening was chilly she suggested that "her ladyship should put on her lace shawl." It was of white Spanish lace, and had formed part of the treasures sent to "Kitty" by Lord Nelson.

With the imperfect light both out of doors and in, the worthy host had not remarked the personal appearance of his guest. A few minutes before her arrival in the dining-room he had been explaining to M. Giraud the cause of the absence of his waiter, who had been at the Château for "quelques jours"; and that in his absence he considered it an honour to wait personally on his clients. With a curious look he bent forward and whispered, "We are entertaining royalty in the village, or, I should say, at the Château. I am a Bonapartist,

as we all are here, but as you know the Duc de Verminoux has abstained from politics—he has always accepted the verdict of the nation, remaining, personally, attached to the royal family. He is very old, quite eighty-four or eighty-five, and in consideration of his great age and his loyalty to the Imperial Government (the Bellais' are, as you know, his devoted friends), and the impossibility of its affecting the politics of the Commune, the Emperor has permitted the Comte de Chambord, in strict incognito, to pay him a visit. Consequently, there are great doings at the Château, but to-morrow we shall resume our état normal; that is to say, His Royal Highness leaves us, and we prepare for our national fête—the fête de l'Empereur."

"And Madame Bellais, is she much interested in these festivities?" asked M. Giraud.

"Hélas!" and the landlord shrugged his shoulders and looked upwards. "Hélas! our brave compatriot, the glory, monsieur, of our village, is not content; it is rumoured, that she has for once, only once, monsieur, figure to yourself that, in sixty years or more, been put on one side, and her wishes disregarded. She too is powerless; I have it from herself; she is powerless I must admit, for can she, a Royalist, demur at the Duc's wish to do honour to his guest? No, monsieur, she is obliged to remain silent, but by her absence at to-morrow's fête she conveys to her neighbours the certainty of her disapproval."

"But what has he done—the Duc—to offend his old friend?"

"To me a mere nothing," answered the landlord. "A mere nothing, sentiment only. It appears that many years ago, after the death of the great Duc, the father of our present friend—for he is our best friend, monsieur—Madame Bellais consulted a clairvoyant. You may say can it be possible that such a woman could have been so foolish? Ah! monsieur, but we have all our 'côté faible,' and why not the mother of heroes? The interview was, I believe, a disappointing one, but among other vague notifications this charlatan did foretell the return of Mademoiselle Gabrielle de Verminoux,

the sister of Monsieur le Duc—a charming child who was lost on the day of her mother's death, the 10th August, 1792, during our Revolutionary troubles—and that the fountains, our great fountains, would not play until her return; consequently they have not done so. But now, to Madame Bellais' great anger, the Duc has given up all hope of welcoming his sister, who, had she lived, which Monsieur must agree with me in thinking is not probable, would be now considerably over seventy. So against her wishes, the Duc, who as a rule does nothing without consulting his old friend, has ordered that to-morrow, on the termination of déjeuner, as the guests leave the dining-room and adjourn to the terrace, at a given signal from him, the waters are to be turned on, and, simultaneously, all the fountains will play. It is a little Versailles, I can assure you. For some days engineers have been regulating and repairing what time only has destroyed. But though 'la mère Bellais' in full costume as nourrice to Mademoiselle deVerminoux (the mother of a marshal of France, monsieur) was at the Château to welcome His Royal Highness, she, the greatest Royalist of them all, has remained at her home since, and has not assisted at any other entertainment. Ah! ah! but on the departure of His Royal Highness, I shall be sorry for the Duc! La mère Bellais will not mince her words! He will have to demand pardon like a schoolboy, Monsieur! The great Emperor, what did he say of our citizen?—'That is the greatest woman in France!' She called him the Usurper, but not to his face though! Now she says that he was worthy of her sons. Ah! but I can tell you that she sits and broods, for she hopes still."

"What! It is not possible that she still expects the child to return?"

"That is as certain as the fact that I am addressing you, monsieur. I believe that the last words of Monseigneur, the late Duc, were these: 'You and Louis will receive her; she will come to me.'"

"This is too strange," ejaculated M. Giraud. But he heard a rustle of skirts, and the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Woodruff.

The landlord murmured, "C'est la belle-mère de monsieur ?

M. Giraud answered, "Yes, une dame anglaise, the widow of a renowned Admiral."

With alacrity and overwhelming politeness the host escorted milady to her seat; and, standing behind M. Giraud, observed keenly the stately woman of whose beauty he had previously been unaware. It perplexed him too, for she seemed familiar to him, though, as he told his wife when he rejoined her in the parlour, he was certain that he had never seen her before, for the very good reason that once seen such beauty could never be forgotten.

"You would laugh at me, Lucie, if I said that she reminded me of Madame la Duchesse ?"

The dinner was excellent; nothing changed at Verminoux, and the cuisine of the *Golden Fleece* had not been influenced by the influx of inferior foreign dishes. To suggest that the ladies of M. Giraud's little party were indifferent to the merits of the various dishes which in turn made their appearance would be an insult to their good taste; and Lady Woodruff admitted a marked preference for French cooking, and told her son-in-law to compliment M. Florens on the skill of his chef. This message was accompanied by a dignified bow, which completed the bewilderment of the proprietor who, at intervals, when taking dishes from a female servant in the ante-room, would ejaculate "Quelle grande dame. Quelle dommage qu'elle ne parle pas le français; c'est une anglaise qui doit être une française ! Je ne comprends rien !"

It was to be quite a festival, so M. Giraud had provided champagne; and they toasted one another, the Queen and Emperor, the army, la mère Bellais, and the Duc; and the gaiety of Lady Woodruff and her son-in-law knew no bounds. Madame Giraud too was very merry, but she could not understand why she felt such depression, and such vague apprehensions. Only last summer her father, her genial kind father, had been among them, whose whole life had been passed in making her mother happy, with such success, it is true, that

unconsciously his widow could enjoy herself immensely without him. The thought of this made her angry. Her mother must have noticed it, for, on retiring for the night, she went to her daughter's room.

After a few commonplace remarks, she said, "Catherine, you do not like me to laugh so much. You think that I am not honouring the memory of your dear father, my adored husband? I can see it, my dear, in your face—do not contradict me! He wishes me to be happy, I know it." Here Lady Woodruff's face became strangely excited—"I know it! But I am losing him, Cathy, I am losing him! You too, you are not to go! You are not to go with your father, and all my happiness!"

It was a long time before Madame Giraud could quiet her, but at last she was comforted, and having kissed her daughter over and over again she returned to her room.

But Lady Woodruff could not sleep. She could not remain in bed, and after vain attempts to court slumber, she got up and looked out of the window. The moon was very bright, and everything seemed strangely familiar; this made her head ache again, as it always did when she wondered, so she bravely made up her mind to read the Psalms of the coming day. She lighted a candle, and taking a Prayer Book from the table near her, did so; and so calmed her excitement; and thus soothed, she felt sleepy, and, getting into bed again, slept soundly.

The next morning found her livelier than ever, but, when asked to accompany the Girauds for a morning drive (M. Giraud had wisely deferred his visit to Madame Bellais until she should be in a more congenial mood), she refused, entreating her children to take no heed of her, and to go out and stay as long as they wished. As Hewitt was fully competent to take charge of his mistress, Catherine left her mother without the slightest scruple. She looked back as they drove down the street and saw her standing on the steps of the Inn, waving her handkerchief gaily.

Left by herself, Lady Woodruff sat down in the sitting-room and read an English newspaper that had been

sent her, and which she had not had time to open before. After an hour or so she went up to her room. Martha, who was working there, helped her to dress for going out. At her request she gave her a pair of white kid gloves. Lady Woodruff then told her that she was going to visit the church. "Shall I go with you, my lady?" said the woman.

"Yes, do, Martha. You can join me, for I shall start at once."

But the chain of circumstances which slowly but surely was leading our heroine to the home of her childhood did not lead in the direction of the church; for on going downstairs, Lady Woodruff lost her way in the somewhat intricate passages of the Inn, and mistook the door of the proprietor's sitting-room for that engaged by M. Giraud for his party. She was so busy putting on her gloves that she did not notice her mistake until, looking up, her eyes rested on a large portrait hanging over the mantelpiece. This struck her at once, and she turned to the door, but curiosity made her retrace her steps, and walking to the fireplace she looked intently at the picture. It was a fine engraving, and represented a lady with a child standing beside her. Lady Woodruff's face assumed the fixed look so usual to it in moments of uncertainty, but on this occasion she shook herself in an impetuous manner, and bending forward read the inscription written on the margin at the bottom of the picture: "D'après le tableau de Madame Vignée le Brun de Madame la Duchesse de Verminoux et Mademoiselle Gabrielle de Verminoux, sa fille." She tottered, put her hands to her head, and cried in a voice of rapture, "Maman! Maman! C'est moi, ta Gabrielle!" and fell senseless on the ground.

Martha looked vainly for her mistress. At last she started for the church, feeling sure that she would find her there. She had not been gone long, when M. Florens, who was standing by the entrance, bowed almost to the ground, for Lady Woodruff passed him. She took no notice of his polite greeting, but hurriedly went down the steps and walking up the street in the opposite direction to the church, reached the wall which formed

a boundary between the village and the park. On reaching it she unfalteringly advanced to a small door which was used only by privileged members of the Château, and, opening it, disappeared.

M. Florens looked round him speechless with astonishment, and went into the Inn to look for his wife. In moments such as these a confidant is an imperative necessity. She too was nowhere to be found. At last he looked into their parlour; even that was empty, but on the hearthrug lay something white. It was a glove. He picked it up and was looking at it when his wife joined him. "The English maid cannot find her mistress," said she, "and the valet is getting very anxious; come and speak to them, Robert."

They left the room together, M. Florens carrying the glove. Martha, looking anxious, was standing by the door gazing down the street; she turned to address M. Florens, when the latter called out, "Look, Mademoiselle, the fountains! The fountains! There, there!" and he showed the astonished English woman the direction in which to look for the objects to which he alluded. Gracefully rising between the trees was a fairy wonderment of water. Here, slender spiral columns rose skywards; there, bouquets of soft, cool, dome-like creations, resembling colossal pearls in an emerald setting, made the park as beautiful as the fabled gardens of the Arabian Nights. Martha, who had never seen the fountains of Versailles, was speechless with wonder, and in her amazement forgot her anxiety and looked on with delight, while M. Florens in the best of spirits called to his wife, "Lucie, ma chere! The fountains play, but where is Mademoiselle de Verminoux?"

He had hardly finished speaking when clearly, but in a jerky manner, as though the hand that held the rope was strangely excited, the alarm bell of the Château rang out—but only for a few wild clangs, then all was silent.

M. Florens looked aghast. "There must be something wrong," he said, "or perhaps one of the guests has sounded the alarm, *pour s'amuser*." His curiosity was further excited by seeing the gates leading up the grand

avenue thrown open; and, shortly after, the Duc's own victoria, driven as though each minute was counted, so important the errand on which it was bound, passed through them. The coachman's face, too, expressed mingled astonishment with professional solidity. But even as the carriage flashed past, M. Florens noticed that it contained the Marquis and General Bellais, and that those gentlemen were so excited that they did not respond to his bow. The victoria drew up sharply before Mon Plaisir and both its occupants went into the house.

It was more than M. Florens could stand! Something had happened! The pace at which M. le Duc's favourite horse had been driven was enough for him! Was he not a friend of the family? Would not Monseigneur himself understand when he, M. Florens, explained all? Were not his joys and sorrows those of the whole community? He would find out! Presto! Hatless he ran down the street, and breathless he reached the carriage. But before his tongue could be made to speak, the coachman, an old friend, anticipated him with, "I will tell you, but go back at once! She has returned to us, Mademoiselle de Verminoux! Go! for we must take back Madame Bellais. I will be with you before evening, or you come to us. Go back! Go back!"

M. Florens, wild with importance, cried, "She has been an inmate of my hotel, and I did not know her. Tell the Marquis or the General! Tell them to come to me!"

"Go back!" cried his friend. "I will arrange."

M. Florens trotted back as quickly as possible; when he regained his doorway he saw with delight that the coachman had vacated his seat, and that the horse was in charge of Madame Bellais' factotum. Shortly after he saw the Marquis walking in his direction—he ran to meet him.

"I know all," he said, "I know all! Come, come quickly! that I may tell you what I know. She is a guest here, M. le Marquis, and I did not know her! This is her glove!" And he pointed to the astonished Martha and Hewitt, "and there are my Lady Woodruff's attendants! Monsieur and Madame, her daughter

and son-in-law have driven to —— but will shortly return. This is a great day, Monsieur!" And poor M. Florens panted with his exertions.

"I can speak English," said the Marquis, "so I shall be able to inform them"—he pointed to Martha and Hewitt—"and will remain here until the return of Madame, my cousin. Florens," he said, looking the excited landlord in the face, "all pleasures have their pains. Our rejoicing will, I fear, be the cause of sorrow to others, for she is very strange, very excited, and thinks herself a child again." A tear coursed down the speaker's cheek. "But we shall see if Madame Bellais brings her back to herself. Now it is so pathetic, for she will not leave her mother's picture."

"That is it!" cried M. Florens, more excited than ever. "She has been called to the past by my picture —the picture given me by your grandfather, now hanging in my parlour. For what did I find there before it but this! This, monsieur, this!" And M. Florens flourished the glove before the Marquis' eyes.

CHAPTER XXIV

" MARIE, MARIE, C'EST MOI, TA GABRIELLE ! "

Your heart's desires be with you !

IT was noon, and Madame Bellais, surrounded by her grandchildren and their children, sat in dignified ease in the dining-room of Mon Plaisir. The meal, which was nearly finished, had been a silent one, for the most casual observer would have remarked the angry gloom that darkened the handsome face of the mistress of the house. A soft light made the room delightfully cool, for the jalousies of the windows which faced the south were closed.

Times had changed since we first made the acquaintance of this extraordinary woman. Mon Plaisir was now no ordinary farmhouse ; it resembled, in fact, the quarters of some general on active service. The walls of the salle à manger were covered with trophies ; a collection of swords arranged on a shield hung over the mantelpiece ; medals in velvet cases, portraits, busts of distinguished officers, and a charming picture of the great Emperor holding in his arms the infant king of Rome, with an inscription under it in the Emperor's own handwriting, gave the room an air of distinction. Two menservants, bronzed and lithe, moved noiselessly from side to side, again and again giving sharp looks in the direction of the head of the table. Their white jackets of military cut were decorated by several medals, clasps and stripes, for they were both old friends and

comrades of the great Marshal, and after serving him faithfully for years, at his death, uninvited, took up their present position in his mother's house, with such determination, that "the mother of soldiers" welcomed them. They arrived two days after the funeral, their kit was thrown clanking to the ground from the diligence in which they had driven from Orleans; their demand to see Madame was acceded to, and then they stood before her—her son's old soldier-servants. She gave them one look, and stretched out her hand, and turned her head in the direction of the window, but her visitors saw a tear roll down her cheek.

Then one spoke. "We can serve him no longer, Madame. So we take upon ourselves the honour of serving you."

The answer came without hesitation—"You are welcome. This is your home, serve if you will." And they made no more of it—they were there.

On Madame Bellais' right hand was a vacant place, evidently laid for a child, for the serviette was unusually large, and tied in a loose knot. A silver mug was beside it; and when not looking angrily into space, it was towards this empty place that Madame Bellais' eyes turned. At last she spoke, addressing one of the soldier-servants: "Dubois, have you seen Charlot?"

"No, madame, not since the early morning."

And the gloom deepened on madame's face, for even Charlot, poor Charlot, had gone against her. The Duc; Louis, her son; Charlot; the others—well, they did not count! But Charlot, who had never left her—ungrateful like the rest! And even the veterans looked downcast.

But Charlot, who has not yet appeared in this narrative, must now be introduced. On the birth of the Duchesse's little daughter, and Madame Bellais' fourth son Louis, it was necessary to find a nurse for the latter, and that nurse was Charlot's mother. She proved all that Madame Bellais could have wished, and Louis was in no way inferior to his brothers, a fact on which his mother prided herself, for he was her favourite child. But one of the three babies born within a day or two of

one another had to suffer, and that one was Charlot, whose foster-mother was all that was undesirable ; and when, on being weaned, he returned to his mother, it was evident that something had gone wrong. She, with the hopefulness of the peasant, thought that "he would grow out of it," and he did grow a fine healthy child, the only thing wrong with Charlot being that mentally he remained one—a good, obedient, loving child.

This was a greater grief to Madame Bellais than to the boy's mother, for she, with her fine sense of justice, took the entire blame ; consequently, when the poor child was left motherless, Charlot was claimed by her, and given a place in the family circle at Mon Plaisir, and treated—well, not as one of her own, but as something to be consoled, indulged, made amends to. He repaid this affection with the devotion of a dog, by abject unquestioning love—" Marraine could do no wrong ! " Marraine represented to his addled brain the universe. His brothers (for the seven Bellais all called him brother) were heroes who carried out Marraine's wishes and commands ; they could live without her, while he, he was her confidant, the child that would never leave her. Let the others go—so much the better, he and Marraine would be alone—for Jean Bellais had died soon after the Duc, and like many somewhat looked-down upon husbands had received post-mortem promotion. He was a man, no one had doubted that fact, but in the sense meant by his widow perhaps they—well, they may have doubted.

The Emperor himself cut but a sorry figure beside the paragon of determination, reckless bravery, foresight and diplomatic skill that had evidently been Jean Bellais as his widow remembered him. At first some may have smiled, but after fifty years of posthumous fame, and the natural thinning off of personal friends, Madame Bellais' version of his character was generally accepted, and the late owner of Mon Plaisir became—after death —its master ! " My husband would have wished this." " Your master did thus ! " " I ?—I only carry out my late husband's arrangements : he was never wrong ! "

"My sons are but sorry representatives of their late father—that was a man!"

Sometimes "la gloire de la France," who never did get on with his mother, looked grim. He was his father's living image, remarkably like what his father would have looked had he possessed the many manly virtues with which absence (without the possibility of return) had endowed this long-suffering, good, kind father.

So when her sons were, all seven of them, with the flag, Charlot was Madame Bellais' faithful loving companion. He never questioned anything, even the Duc was a mere nothing beside Marraine. With an accuracy almost mechanical he executed the commissions and orders given him daily; for, aided by Charlot, Madame Bellais carried on her late husband's farm; and, as she was a fine organizer, one to whom the minutest detail was of importance, she was successful, and prospered.

They were such friends, too, the renowned Madame Bellais and her adopted child, and he was the only one permitted to see and enjoy the vast tenderness of heart which our old friend possessed in such unknown depths, but had so carefully concealed from the outside world. He had been at Verminoux with Jean Bellais when the catastrophe occurred which changed all their lives, and on the return of Marraine from Paris had joined in the family grief at the loss of both the Duchess and her little daughter; and, as he never grew in mind after eight, he still prayed night and morning the childish prayer taught him by Marraine, a prayer of entreaty "that the missing one might be under Divine guidance, and that in God's own time she might be restored to her home and to those who loved her."

Time was not noticed by Charlot. *She* might come any day, he felt sure, and to further this happy event, and with the permission of Madame Bellais, he from his own pocket-money spent quite a little fortune on the tapers which burnt day and night in the Lady Chapel. In his childhood and early manhood these were short and slender, but with continued prosperity they increased in size and number. Charlot, by this simple faith, was

one of the principal causes of the cult paid in the village to the memory of the lost child. Among the children it was a common cause, a general wish, "to burn a candle with Charlot," and hardly a day passed that two or three tapers, hardly bigger than slate pencils, did not burn by the side of Charlot's. Madame Bellais viewed this extravagance with benign graciousness, and on festivals subscribed liberally, but her special cult (shared too by Charlot) was the Calvaire, situated on the border of the forest, almost on the boundary of the farm. This she kept up at her own expense. In it was an alms-box: "For wayfarers, wanderers, and the poor and needy." It was always well furnished. Were not those loved ones once wanderers? Had they ever reached a haven? Had charitable hands welcomed them? In all seasons it was visited officially twice a week: Madame Bellais chose Fridays; the Curé, Saturdays, for the best of reasons, as then he emptied the alms-box, and the money it contained was distributed by him on the following day, after High Mass. But Charlot was there many times a week, and it was his special pride to keep the plot of ground surrounding it in good order and free from weeds.

From her youth, Madame Bellais had been interested in this pious monument, for her father had been one of "les enfants de Verminoux" whose bones rested in American soil.

Yes! Charlot was the associate of her every-day life, connected, too, with her young womanhood; her other interests were important without doubt, for with age her horizon had widened. In early days limited to Paris and Verminoux, now it comprised the whole of France. At first it was the regiments her sons were in, then it became the divisions they commanded, and now she had ties and relations with the greater part of the army. "La Mére Bellais" was renowned and respected. Her sons had all taken upon themselves to leave her; those who still lived were important personages; they could, and had, looked after themselves, and in so doing their mother was free to do as she wished. So, as she was now wealthy, she spent large sums of money in

subscribing to everything she thought beneficial to the soldiers; no soldier ever asked the Marshal's mother for anything in reason without his request being acceded to. General Louis Bellais, who was as great a favourite in the army as his celebrated brother, often smiled at the strange requests that seemingly delighted his mother. She alluded to her own children as "mes fils," to the soldiers as "mes enfants."

Mon Plaisir, too, had changed. The exterior of the homestead had not been altered, but there were many changes in the interior. Built to form a square in 1792, the side facing the village street only was reserved for the family, the three remaining being used, as is still the custom in some old-fashioned farms in France, for stables, cow-houses, granaries, etc., over which were the bedrooms reserved for the unmarried men and boys employed on the farm. A balcony, to which access was gained by two outside stairways, gave that indescribable charm which our forefathers undoubtedly obtained in domestic architecture. The number of family visitors who unceasingly made Mon Plaisir their home, and the many servants, nurses, and orderlies who accompanied them, necessitated the conversion of nearly the whole of these buildings to domestic use. The court, originally the farmyard, was divided into two portions; the one nearer the house being used as a flower garden, the other as a stable yard for madame's horse and carriage only. There were one or two benches in this, near the stable, on which during the summer months the veterans before alluded to regularly smoked their evening pipes, and, to the delight of all listeners, as regularly fought their battles over again.

The windows of the salle à manger looked into the flower garden, a garden in which only old-fashioned flowers were allowed to bloom, and where bees hummed unceasingly, for Madame Bellais kept bees there, and their presence had been remarked upon by the great Emperor as, standing by Madame Bellais, looking into the newly planted garden, his eyes fell upon the row of hives. With a grim look at the Royalist mother of the men who had given their lives for him, he said: "What

greater proof can I have of your devotion ? You give me great soldiers, and you cherish imperial bees ! " History does not record the answer of la Mére Bellais.

There were three windows to the salle à manger. The jalousies of the centre one were not fastened—they never were, for it was convenient for any one sitting in the garden, and who wished to communicate some information to the occupant of the salle à manger to open them at will. As Madame Bellais' seat faced the window, she was usually the person addressed.

Déjeuner was over, and Dubois was on the point of handing his mistress coffee, when these jalousies opened, and a childish old face looked in. It was Charlot's, and he gazed at his Marraine triumphantly. She did not look at him, but turned her head away silently. Charlot did not look disturbed ; he said simply, " Vous savez " (you know). Madame Bellais answered sharply, " Do not say 'you know' to me ! "

But Charlot repeated himself again, and said, " You know, Marraine, that *she* has come back to us—' La petite de Verminoux ' ? "

A pin might have dropped in the room, the silence was so intense ; furtively all eyes were turned on the mistress of the house, but she gave no sign. The silence, only momentary, was broken by the sound of wheels. A carriage stopped before the house, and hurried footsteps were heard crossing the hall.

The door was opened, and the Marquis and General Louis Bellais entered, both evidently much overcome.

" Mother ! " said the General, " we bring you news."

But he was not allowed to continue, for Madame Bellais, getting up from her seat, said, " I know, Louis I know ! You have come for me. I will not detain you long ! " And she walked majestically to the window, through which Charlot was still looking, and gave him a kiss.

He took her by the hand, and said tenderly, " You see, Marraine, I was right ! " And the occupants of the room heard the unexpected answer, " Yes, my child, you were wise."

Dubois *threw* open the door (by such a term only can I indicate the pride of the old soldier in the *sang froid* of his mistress), and without a sign she walked to her bedroom, which was on the ground floor, and rang the bell for her maid.

Then there was a suppressed murmur of voices. "Is it true what Charlot says?" was the universal cry. "Yes!" answered both visitors in a breath, "without the question of a doubt she has returned, but she recognizes no one—how could she?—but the place. His Royal Highness was the first to realize who it could be. We came at once, and can tell you no more. She turned on the water, and came dancing up the Fountain Court as she used to as a child. Do not ask more, it is too sad, too sad! Our poor little one! Where did you see her, Charlot? or how came you to know?"

"You know," said Charlot—he always prefaced every sentence with "you know"—"that Mademoiselle Gabrielle was to return when the fountains played. Well, when Marraine was angry with Monseigneur I was surprised, and said, 'Marraine, you are wrong! We have waited, you and I, for this! Why have we prayed together? Why have we burned our tapers? Why have we made our weekly pilgrimage to the Calvaire?—but for the safe return of Mademoiselle? She was to come, you told me, when the great fountains played. Well, the moment has come, Monseigneur has ordered the fountains to play, she will come. Why not? Are you ever wrong, Marraine?' But she was angry. She said I was no better than the rest"—here Charlot sucked his thumb and looked round him with friendly sympathy—"no better than the rest! Then I thought, Louis is a soldier, he may be right, and he thinks that Monseigneur should do as he wishes, and then"—here he laughed—"I was certain she would come, but I would not tell Marraine. I thought 'Let her see that Louis is right sometimes,'" and the childish old man stretched out his arms in the direction of General Bellais, who took a step or two forward and, with a Frenchman's spontaneous absence of affectation, kissed his foster-brother warmly.

"Well, as you know, Marraine was silent. We who loved her"—he pointed to the general company—"dared not speak or smile; but I watched and thought, 'How soon, dear one, you will be happy? Your gloom will soon be over!' This morning it was dreadful, but Charlot was happy. I went (no one knew), and I hid in the cave under the great fountain where the little tap is—you know, Louis, the little tap that the great Duc had made for Mademoiselle Gabrielle! No one knew"—he laughed with glee—"and I polished it so brightly that it looked like gold, and I oiled it, for the workman did not care about it, and then I hid behind the great rocks and waited. But I did not wait long, for soon I heard footsteps, and she came just as Marraine said she would come—not the little girl we lost, Louis!" here he burst into tears, "but an old lady, a beautiful old lady with silver curls, and she was singing the song Marraine sings," and he sang, "Malbrock s'en va-t-en guerre" and then continued, "I kept quiet, and she pulled the stone away that hides the tap, and I saw her turn on the fountains. Then I knew that she had returned to us, and I came back for Marraine."

At this moment a rap was heard at the door, and the coachman asked if he could see the Marquis. "Come in, come in!" cried all.

"I have news," he said. "M. Florens has been to me, and wishes to see Monsieur"—addressing the Marquis—"Mademoiselle is, I believe, an English lady staying at the *Golden Fleece*."

The Marquis looked round him, and said, "I will go at once, Louis. You are better alone with your mother. Charlot, my friend, as Marraine says, 'You were wise!'"

He then left the room, leaving the door open. Not a moment after, the door of the opposite room opened, and Madame Bellais appeared, dressed in her costume of nourrice. Time had powdered her still luxuriant hair, and excitement heightened her colour, and in this supreme moment of her life she seemed almost to have regained the beauty of her youth. Her eyes flashed,

No one moved. Louis alone addressed his mother, with "That's right! She will recognize you at once. Come, mother!" and he took his mother by the hand, and led her to the carriage.

The horse's head was turned in the direction of the Château and, though the great news was already known to many of the villagers, with true politeness they refrained from any demonstration that might give umbrage, or annoy their beloved old neighbour. The Curé alone felt it incumbent in his position, and as a proof of friendly sympathy, to bow as the carriage passed. But the "Mother of Soldiers" did not see him. It is doubtful if those proud eyes of hers saw anything. When in the carriage she clutched her son's hand and held it as though her life depended upon its aid. She did not notice the lodge-keeper who bowed as she passed, or the park rangers who stood farther up the avenue; for years Madame Bellais had ruled at the Château as no Duchesse de Verminoux had ever ruled. At the Porte d'Honneur menservants waited for her on either side, and, as the carriage drew up, the maître d'hôtel advanced to meet and welcome her. The sight of this man, dressed as her uncle had been when she, Marie, had confided her idolized nursling to him, was almost too much for the valiant old woman. She gave him her hand as a friend might; "I cannot bear much," was all she said, and she left her son to walk with the Duc's servitor. Was not she, Marie Bellais, a servitor? Were not the old times better than the new? Did she not wear livery like these men? She looked at them kindly as they bowed before her, and with an energetic toss of her lace-capped head, she walked by the side of the maître d'hôtel to the drawing-room.

A murmur of voices greeted her, as though many grown-up people were comforting a child, a child that refused to be comforted. But as Capet announced in a clear voice "Marie Bellais," these voices as well as the weeping seemed to cease by magic. There was a momentary silence, and then as she stood with wide-open arms and dilated eyes, she heard a voice cry, "Marie! I am here, I am here, at home at last! Marie, take me to

mamma!" And some one taller than she, some one dressed in black, with long silver curls, threw herself into her arms, and Marie's arms closed round her lost darling as though they would never release her again.

CHAPTER XXV

JACK KEEPS HIS WORD

Adieu! and take thy praise with thee to heaven.
—1 *Henry IV.*

"MARIE, Marie, has the time seemed long?" were the first words that fell upon Madame Bellais' astonished ears, and she looked wonderingly at the tear-stained face of the questioner.

"Long, my darling?—why, a lifetime!"

"I did try, Marie, I did try to be like Pierre, but—but I lost my way. Now I am home again, home for ever. Never let me go away again, I will wait here for mamma, here in my own home! There is some one here, Marie, an old, old gentleman, who says that he is Lulu! His voice reminds me of Lulu's—can Lulu have grown old in waiting?"

"Yes, my darling. Old! why, we've all grown old in waiting, but what is that? We have waited for something!" and again she clasped her treasure in her arms.

With the pettishness of a spoilt child, Lady Woodruff struggled to get free. "Let me go now," she cried, "I have much to see. It must be a year since we were here at Verminoux. We will go to Toto and Mimi, and, Marie, we will take with us Mademoiselle de France! Give me the key, and I will go and unlock the box in which we packed her. It is 'yes,' is it not, Marie?"

"Yes, yes," answered Marie. "But mademoiselle must not go; she is tired after her long journey. We will send a lady who knows where to find all mademoiselle's toys; she will bring them to us.

"Not all here! The doll, mademoiselle, but the others we will have taken to Madame la Duchesse's room, for it is in that room mademoiselle will sleep while awaiting madame's return." And with an air almost sublime in the majesty of its grief, Madame Bellais took from the bunch of keys that hung by her side the tiny one belonging to the little trunk, and handed it to a young woman standing beside her. As she did so, she addressed her with "Madame Léonie, you know where everything is! Will you—will you lend Mademoiselle Gabrielle a hat? See!" and Marie pointed to the black bonnet, which lay in fragments. "And will madame take this," and she gave the lady addressed another key. "In the bureau in Madame la Duchesse's room, in the top drawer, madame will find a lace fichu, which I can tie round mademoiselle."

Quite pleased with these preparations for her visit of inspection, Lady Woodruff smiled sweetly on the two or three inmates of the salon; for, with the exception of the Duc, his daughter-in-law, and her son's wife, the other guests had retired to the terrace. She looked attentively into the Duc's face, and after a lengthy survey said, looking at Marie, "Yes, Marie, you have both changed, for it is Lulu!" and she left Madame Bellais and threw herself into her brother's arms, saying, "You must have loved me to get old so quickly, Lulu! But perhaps your sorrow and anxiety were not entirely for me! You, too, have waited for mamma; to wait for those we love is, oh! so tedious! Sometimes, Lulu, I have wondered, has Pierre deceived me, and that we shall never see her again—that those dreadful men may have killed her!" Here she put her hands to her head, and cried, "But I cannot think, or my head will burst! Is Pierre not here? How have I come home?" Again she was getting wildly excited, when the young lady addressed by Madame Bellais as "Madame Léonie" returned, accompanied by a maid, who carried the little trunk that contained "Mademoiselle de France."

The sight of this childish treasure and the memories it invoked of the old days when the father of her nurs-

ling and she had mourned together, combined with the extraordinary realization of the Duc's dream, and the certainty that her darling was not likely to remain long with them, roused that spirit of combativeness which had so often carried Madame Bellais triumphantly through life. With the same gentleness and caution, as though cajoling a sick child, she unlocked the trunk, but while Lady Woodruff's attention was engrossed with her doll, she took the opportunity of speaking quietly to the Duc. "You have sent for Dr. —— ?"

He, without lifting his eyes from his sister's face, which was now as happy as that of a child, answered, "Louis telegraphed to Paris at once. Dr. —— will be here some time to-morrow. Fortunately we have His Royal Highness' doctor in the house. He says that there is no immediate danger, but that we must amuse her continually." As he finished speaking he looked up, then he realized the futility of human aspirations! The wish of their hearts had been given them; they had welcomed home the darling of the house; that supreme moment so longed for had come and gone; she was there by their side, apparently unconscious of having left them for any length of time. His eyes unwittingly gazed past his old friend and his sister, and in a mirror behind them he saw the group previously incomplete. What old people they all were! He the oldest by far, for Madame Bellais looked unnaturally young. That exquisite old lady playing with a doll, was that their little Gabrielle? There was not the shadow of a doubt! She was unquestionably his sister, for her recognition of the objects with which she was surrounded was unmistakable. The very dogs, dead and forgotten years ago, were recalled to his memory by being asked for by their old playmate. His father's dogs! Her toys, fortunately, could be produced. Time had ceased for his sister, for in mind she was still eight years of age; and with his eyes still glued to the mirror he was seized with a perfect frenzy of resentment at the cruelty of nature. Why, if the mind could still retain its youth, did not the human frame? They had all three passed the limit assigned to humanity by the Psalmist. Old!

They were all three very old! He shuddered, for he was recalled to action by his sister's voice. "Lulu, my hat is here, we will go at once to see the dogs."

He willingly assented, and looked on wonderingly as Marie tied a large leghorn hat trimmed with blue ribbons and pink roses on his sister's head, and wrapped round her shoulders a fichu of the costliest Mechlin lace. She looked at him tenderly, regretfully too, and taking him by the arm kissed him again, and thanked him for having sorrowed for her, and said with brilliant vivacity, "Yes! You and Marie have grown old with waiting; but the time of waiting is past, and soon, dear Lulu, you will be young again. I know it!" And, with her usual stately grace, she unerringly led her brother to the terrace.

It was crowded with guests, who had been warned by the doctor to appear as though it were a fête, at which they were invited to congratulate their host on the return of his sister. But the assembled company, composed, with a few exceptions, of the highest aristocracy of France, was not prepared for the dignity with which their congratulations were received, or the intuitive recognition accorded to His Royal Highness. With the almost forgotten etiquette of Versailles, he was treated as a prince, and though there was with all her courteous recognition of his royal rank an air of questioning wonder, "Mademoiselle de Verminoux" gave him the homage due to his rank.

While she was thus occupied, a movement on the terrace attracted the Duc's attention. At a sign from His Royal Highness he joined his son, who had now returned. Gracefully retiring as a child might do after being received by those older than herself, Lady Woodruff bowed herself away from the immediate presence of His Royal Highness. With glee she took Marie by the arm, saying, "Now, Marie, you and I will go and see the dogs."

Together they started on their round of inspection. To Marie it was as though the past had indeed returned. For an hour the present was forgotten in the memories invoked by her lost child. It was—"Here, Marie

But why have you changed this ? Oh ! where has that gone ? " A Toto and a Mimi were in their kennels, resembling the late Duc's dogs ; they fawned to meet Marie, but growled and showed their teeth at her companion. This want of welcome on the part of her old playmates caused a pettish flow of tears, but the dogs becoming more genial, and evidently wishing to make amends for their want of reciprocation, came nearer, and were at once detected as new-comers, and the fate of their predecessors was eagerly inquired about. For once, Marie was nearly at her wits' end.

They had wandered some distance from the Château when the sound of voices in a neighbouring alley claimed Lady Woodruff's attention, and she hurried to meet the party advancing in her direction. It consisted of the Duc, M. and Mme. Giraud, and a strange gentleman, His Royal Highness' doctor. Catherine advanced to meet her mother with outstretched arms, saying, " Mamma, mamma, we are so happy, Léon and I ! " But her mother looked at her, frowning as she did so, and, clinging to Marie, cried, " Take her away ! Take her away. It is she that has kept me from you. I do not know her, but she tried to prevent me from returning to those I loved. I always knew that I should find the way, but it was, oh ! so difficult, and whenever I was nearly here she took the light from me ! For it was a light I followed—a light here ! " Here she put her hands to her head. And then she looked craftily at her brother and laughed so strangely that the hearers shuddered. " I never told, but I came. It was very easy at the last ! "

Then better feelings seemed to regain ascendency, and she looked graciously at her unrecognized daughter, and said, " Madame perhaps did not understand, and without doubt regrets her mistaken zeal." Taking her brother by the arm, she again addressed her daughter. " As madame implies a previous acquaintance, I feel sure that she will be welcomed here as an invited guest." And without deigning another word Lady Woodruff turned in the opposite direction, and with feverish energy intreated the Duc to re-visit the haunts of their

childhood. Lightly, and apparently without fatigue, talking as a child might do, she took him to each well-remembered spot. With delight she showed her brother a nook in which years previously he had found her a bird's nest, and he, too, remembered the incident, and recalled the lovely child that had so delighted in it. At first it was anguish to recall his youth, but gradually he, too, found himself, not only acquiescing, but alluding to many past delights. And while they wandered about the beautiful grounds, chatting gaily as they walked, he, listening, heard mingled with his sister's voice the rhythm of the falling water—even, soothing, giving repose, though itself suggesting perpetual motion by its never-ceasing pulsations of regular splashy beats, and cooling, too, he thought, hopefully, as he looked anxiously at the brilliant colour on his sister's cheeks.

"Gabrielle," he said at last, "papa said the fountains were not to play until your return; you see that we obeyed him, for they are playing to-day for the first time since you left."

"And you will keep them playing, Lulu, will you not, while I" —here Lady Woodruff looked inquiringly into her brother's face—"while I remain?"

"Yes!" he answered, though a chill struck him through the heart. He was very weary, while she, seemingly without fatigue, was still planning further rambles, when the doctor before alluded to joined them with a message from Madame Bellais that "mademoiselle was to remember that Monsieur Lulu was now old, and unable to take the long walks he enjoyed in his youth; and that mademoiselle was to return at once for her *goûter*." Without a murmur, and with the air of a child that had unwittingly transgressed through excitement, Lady Woodruff returned to the Château, where Marie, with Martha dressed in some hastily arranged costume, and Hewitt in the de Verminoux livery, were awaiting her. Madame Bellais had already taken the latter almost into her confidence, and doubtless would have done so completely had it been possible to do so by a more explicit medium than signs, but she had already gleaned much from him by the aid of a lady visitor who

spoke English. That he, Hewitt, was not surprised, and that his master, Sir John, had always expected that something might happen; that Madame Giraud knew very little about it, and that the Folkestone doctor knew a good deal. All these facts were seized upon by Madame Bellais, and accorded a sinister interpretation, in which she was too just to give her informant any possible blame.

"Treachery! Treachery! Only more English treachery! Who could be even with such a nation! And the 'braves' the Emperor had wasted in aiding such as they to take even more chestnuts from the fire! As for Martha, well, she was beneath contempt. She might be useful—but intelligent? Bah!" And Martha, standing bewildered, and, though a Briton, frightened to death by the fiery glances of Marie's fierce eyes, never forgot the moment, or her dear mistress' face when she entered the dining-room from the terrace by one of the wide-open windows. "Lovelier even than the picture," said the woman when, home again in Church Street, she recounted the events we are now depicting. "But she did not know me—there!" and she burst into tears. "I always think as she did Hewitt, but that was because of Sir John, but, lor'! me? why she never so much as said 'Martha!' It was all 'Marie.' It was hard at first, but now that it is all cleared up, it's what might have been expected. It's all changed now, and I am going to France to live with Madame Bellais, as she can't bear me out of her sight!"

Marie acted her part to perfection, and gave the reprimand that was evidently expected, with a breaking heart. The chocolate, roll and glass of milk were handed with injunctions to eat with appetite; but, though received with evident pleasure, Marie noticed that nothing was eaten, and that even the glass of milk, though lifted to her darling's lips, was put down untasted. From behind a screen the doctor, too, was watching. He gave an almost imperceptible sign, not so imperceptible, however, as to pass unnoticed by the Duc, who, on their leaving the room, at once accosted

him with—"It is as you feared from the first? Do not deceive me."

"I may be wrong," answered the doctor, "but in cases of this kind the patient, as a rule, refuses food, and continues to do so until the end. Of course artificial methods of feeding may prolong life, but even when they are resorted to the patient in many cases dies from exhaustion, brought on by over-excitement, otherwise joy. Ah! Monseigneur, we must not forget that if sorrow does not kill, joy will. It is 'la joie qui fait peur'—is it not?"

"Yes!" answered the Duc. "Yes! But we will try every method."

"Do not forget," said the doctor, "that though twelve years your junior your sister is an old lady, and that in her case, as she thinks herself a child, there will be no effort; she will die a child; for, hard as it is for me to tell you, there can be no hope of her ever regaining her reason. She must at some time have had concussion of the brain. She will be very happy, and we must do our best to make her so. To-morrow, on the arrival of my distinguished confrère, we may have a more hopeful opinion, but mine is, I regret to say, already pronounced. Madame Bellais can do more than any of us; she may perhaps induce her to take rest. It appears that she has been on the move since noon, and has eaten nothing since she took her café and rolls in her room at the *Golden Fleece*."

Joining the other members of the family, the Duc kindly welcomed Madame Giraud, who, though calmed for the time being, was still in a highly nervous state. She asked eagerly for the latest news of her mother, and piteously demanded, "Was there any prospect of her recognizing her again?" "Time will do much," was the answer. "To-morrow, Dr. ——, of Paris, the celebrated specialist for diseases of the brain, will join us; until then, my dear niece, we may hope."

If human sympathy could have comforted Catherine Giraud she would have been comforted, but from the moment she had been repulsed by her mother, many incidents forgotten, or perhaps not even noticed at the

time they occurred, came back with the vividness of despair. "Papa must have known. Why was such and such a thing never alluded to? Why was her little Aunt Kitty never spoken of, though she knew that both her grandparents and her father adored her memory? And why was she scolded once for even mentioning the Frenchy? Her beloved father had told her that her mother in childhood had been injured on the head, and that was the cause of their caution. No! Her mother had not been mad all her life, but that she was so now, she felt sure; and a dull sense of certainty was round her heart that told her that her mother would never recover her reason.

"You must keep up," said the doctor. "Remember that those who have waited for her are much to be pitied. Your mother's return has been the one wish of Madame Bellais' life—and the Duc's too. What must they feel? It will make you happier in the future. See her joy! Every other incident in her life is forgotten. She has gone back to the time when from some accident she must have had concussion of the brain. She will be present to-night at dinner, and is delighted at the prospect of sitting between His Royal Highness and the Duc. When I left her, she was promising Madame Bellais that, if she would tell her a story, she would lie on her bed as long as she wished. She is to occupy her mother's room, from the window of which I believe the late Duc used to watch for the return of his daughter. We cannot understand much from the servants; but I speak English, and Hewitt informs me that an old pensioner of your late father's, he thinks, was the first to awaken suspicions by some reference he must have made to your mother of her childhood. But in all the contrary opinions and unfounded suspicions that I feel sure will be generally talked about for the next few days, may I ask you to keep as calm and collected as possible? All will be cleared up in time, and for the present we must only think of those who have regained one whose loss changed their very existence by tinging it with uncertainty; for both the Duc and Madame Bellais have never ceased

to hope, though at the grand moment it was not the Duc who recognized his sister, but His Royal Highness."

Between her sobs, Madame Giraud asked for a detailed account of their meeting. "I will give you one with pleasure," was the answer.

"We had all finished déjeuner; the Duc had just toasted 'La France,' the only political toast permitted here; and we had risen from the table and were about to pass through the open windows on to the terrace where coffee was to be served while the fountains played, but before I reached the window I heard the Duc exclaim, 'Why the fountains are playing! Who can have anticipated my orders?' Then I heard more exclamations of wonder. By this time I was on the terrace and could see what was going on. At the end of the Fountain Court, immediately before the terrace, I saw a lady dancing among the flower beds, dangling a bonnet by the strings. She was singing 'Malbrock s'en va-t-en guerre,' and was evidently dancing to her own shadow. As she came nearer we could see that the intruder was an old lady of remarkable beauty. Some ladies said, 'It must be a mad woman who has escaped from some *maison de santé*. The Duc said nothing, he seemed turned to stone. But the dancing figure came nearer and nearer, until it was at the bottom of the steps, then it stopped for a moment to look up and smile at us, when, to my intense surprise, I saw His Royal Highness go down the steps. When half-way, he, too, stopped, and bowing, said, 'Soyez-la bien venue, Mademoiselle de Verminoux?' And then the Duc joined them with outstretched arms and cries of 'Gabrielle! Gabrielle! our lost darling!' But beyond a bow to His Royal Highness, the lady took no heed of them, but with cries of 'Mamma! Mamma! I am here, your Gabrielle!' passed them and hastened to the drawing-room. She never hesitated until she stood under her mother's portrait, to which she addressed the most pathetic entreaties, telling it that she had been lost in seeking for her in some land beyond the sea, whence she had vainly attempted to return by a rocky path that led to France; but that even then some one

had prevented her, she could not remember who. 'Every one is gone, mamma. Every one is gone! Come for me! Come for me or send Marie!' Then she saw her bonnet, and looked at it wonderingly. 'What is that horrid thing?' she cried; 'I hate it, I hate it!' and she tore it to fragments. His Royal Highness, the Duc, and the ladies of the house were round her all the time doing their best to comfort her and explain. General Bellais had gone for his mother, and shortly after she returned with him, dressed in the old costume, and was recognized at once by her former nursling. But my insipid description can give you but an imperfect impression of the pathos of the scene; it was heart-rending. You must be prepared, dear lady, for much sadness; and your only comfort in the future will be that to the best of your ability you increased the happiness of those who have waited so long for 'to-day.' She is theirs now, for in mind she is the child who left them."

Jack's daughter looked at the Frenchman with eyes that had in them the same expression as her father's when he looked death in the face. She said, "You do not think my mother will ever recover? Tell me the truth."

"No!" said the man she questioned. "No, you must be brave. We will do our best. Remember that suffering humanity, as a rule, dies from pain and disease; your mother will die from joy—will not that comfort you?"

"No!" cried Catherine Giraud. "Nothing can comfort me yet; but I will do my best. Tell me how I am to act."

"Appear as though only a visitor here; I will keep you well informed. Do not irritate your mother; if you do, we shall have to ask you to leave the Château; now you will see her continually. May I ask you to take rest?"

"Yes," said Madame Giraud, "I will follow your advice; but you must know that my heart is broken, and that Madame Bellais is no friend." And in separate rooms in the vast Château mother and child rested.

Later on, wearied and miserable, Madame Giraud joined the assembled guests in the *grand salon*. Many gathered round her in friendly sympathy. A few minutes before dinner was announced, a door opened, one not used by the general company, and His Royal Highness, with the Duc and "Mademoiselle de Verminoux" entered.

She was regally dressed in a blue and silver brocade dress that had formerly belonged to her mother; a fichu Marie Antoinette of some wonderful lace was crossed over her bosom and tied in an artistic bow behind. With loving hands, Marie had literally covered her lost child with the diamonds her father had left in her charge for his darling. The combs that kept back the silver curls had diamond backs, and, reckless of English titles, Marie had adorned Lady Woodruff's stately head with a coronet. Neck, arms, waist, all were encircled with glistening gems, and Catherine, bewildered by her mother's appearance, gathered a little hope when she saw that the bunch of roses placed on the left side of the fichu were the same as those so loved by her father.

A general salutation followed, and when the dining-room doors at the end of the salon were thrown open and dinner announced, the company followed, wondering as they did so at the stately figures of their hosts. Seated between His Royal Highness and her brother, Lady Woodruff charmed them both by her vivacious gaiety. She was even witty, and her youthful flow of spirits remained undiminished to the end of the meal. But though food of all kinds was placed before her nothing was touched, and a feeling of unreality grew upon those nearer her. The same questioning doubt filled His Royal Highness with sorrow, and the Duc with horror. The latter would often take his sister's hand in his own, as though to assure himself of her substantiality; and to quiet his apprehensions that the unearthly looking being beside him was no living woman, but a creation of his fancy.

On regaining the salon, with the air of a perfectly docile child, Lady Woodruff, after kissing His Royal

Highness' hand, bowed herself out of the room. Then Marie put her to bed as in the old days, and later on she, too, sought repose on a bed hastily put up in the late Duc's dressing-room. But Marie did not sleep; she was in and out, visiting that other bed, on which slumbered her recovered child, sometimes watching anxiously by its side for half an hour at a time. But Lady Woodruff slept soundly, and at last, worn out by excitement, so did Madame Bellais.

She was awakened next morning by merry chattering. She looked hurriedly at the clock on the mantelpiece of her room. It was only half-past six—who could have dared enter her charge's room without her permission? With considerable excitement she got out of bed and looked into her darling's room. She was up, and surrounded by her toys, which she had divided into three portions on a table that she had removed from its accustomed place. Before each pile of toys was a chair, the only one occupied being the one she evidently considered her own. On Marie's abrupt entrance, Lady Woodruff, getting up, came hurriedly forward, lifting her hand at the same time, evidently to enforce some injunction.

"Marie, Marie, His Royal Highness the Dauphin is here? Marie, make your reverence," and she pointed to the chair placed at the head of the table. With ready wit, Madame Bellais bowed as though once more in the playroom of the Tuileries.

"And, Marie, he has brought with him another companion for me to play with, one he tells me that I must love, for she has always loved me in the spirit land. She is not pretty, Marie, but so merry, that is why His Royal Highness loves her. She never knew earthly sorrow, she is 'une petite folle.' She laughs continually, and, Marie, stranger still, she is wearing a dress such as I used to wear. They have come to amuse me, Marie, for this is now a sad house. Yes, Marie, do not look as though I grieve you, but is not a house without children sad? Is it not like a garden without flowers? If not to you, Marie, it is to me; for if you and Lulu have grown old with waiting,

remember that I am still a child! Marie, they are pleased to see you; and His Royal Highness always loved you, as you know, but the eyes of 'la petite folle' look at you with even greater love in them. Dress me, Marie, and I will take them round the grounds."

Marie rang a bell, and, returning to her own room, was aided in her own toilette by her own maid and Martha. The doctor joined them before they again entered Lady Woodruff's room. He heard the morning's news without astonishment, and suggested that the breakfast sent to his patient should be prepared as though for three children, "and, Madame Bellais, with the same etiquette as though for the royal nursery. When you are ready for me I will join you."

On Madame Bellais' return to her darling, she found her perfectly happy, evidently engaged at some game, but she willingly ceased playing in order to be dressed. Bowing with stately reverence to the head of the table, Lady Woodruff excused herself for a few minutes, and after a short interval sufficient for an answer, she backed out of the room into the dressing-room, Madame Bellais imitating her in every way. When the door of communication was closed, she informed Marie that her visitors were leaving her for a short time, but would return for breakfast.

While dressing her beloved one, Madame Bellais was not idle. Her maid was sent to the doctor, who had joined the Duc; she, having heard everything, was able to answer every question asked her. When the woman left the room, His Royal Highness, who had been present, advanced and took the Duc's hand.

"I have sent for Baudry," said the Duc; "he will be here with Dr. ——. I wish to have my sister's portrait as we see her now. Her daughter tells me that Romney painted her when a girl as Psyche, and that the picture is his masterpiece; but I must have some picture to recall to those that come after me the tragedy we are now witnessing. It cannot last long; her strength must fail her soon."

"You are right, dear friend," said His Royal Highness.

"May I be permitted to remain with you? I, who welcomed, may I bid adieu?"

"You will comfort me more than I can tell you, if you will remain with me to the end," said the Duc. So His Royal Highness remained.

The breakfast was untouched, though served with all the etiquette due to royalty. The walks in the gardens, and the visits to the various animals were enjoyed as on the previous day.

Before noon Dr. —— arrived; he confirmed the opinion already given, and told the assembled family that the end was now but a question of hours.

"I only sorrow for you," was his final remark, "otherwise what could be more beautiful than the death of your mother," addressing Madame Giraud, "or your sister," turning to the Duc. "She dies from exhaustion, brought on by over-excitement. Those who had the care of her during childhood must have known that such would be the case if she rejoined her friends, and possibly for that reason prevented her return to France."

The colour flashed angrily on Madame Giraud's face, as she answered: "Had my grandfather or father known with whom to communicate I feel sure they would never have allowed my mother's family to have been kept in ignorance of her safety." But, remembering the advice given her the day before, she curbed the indignant remark that was on the point of issuing from her lips. She was not allowed to speak to her mother, and beyond a courteous bow obtained no recognition from her. So she, too, wandered listlessly about the grounds, irritated even by the sound of the falling water. It was dreadful that since the arrival of the Paris doctor she seemed to feel a coolness in those who previously had done their best to comfort her.

In these suspicions she wronged those who surrounded her, for with one exception they never doubted her good word; but it was her British stand-off-ishness, increased by grief, that kept those sympathetic Frenchmen and women at arm's length.

But "Come what may, Time and the hour run through the longest day," and the evening did come

Baudry, since his arrival, had never ceased painting; and his genius had already given birth to a masterly sketch so perfect in its likeness that even he, as a rule never content with his work, smiled with satisfaction.

But with evening there came to Lady Woodruff intense weariness. She did not even ask to dine in the salle à manger, but remained in her room, where she received another visit from His Royal Highness. She was very tender to him, and looked again and again in his face and then in the direction where she saw, or imagined she saw, the Dauphin. At last, when he bade her "good-night," she followed him into the dressing-room, and, after kissing his hand, said, "Do not attach importance to earthly crowns, for His Royal Highness tells me that they are but crowns of thorns. His was a crown of martyrdom. It is the pure in heart that see God—his was a pure heart, and he loves you, though I do not know who you are. He, the Dauphin, stretches out his arms in your direction. But I cannot stay, I must go to them, for they are leaving soon, and I am to join them shortly. Some one else, they will not tell me who, is to come for me."

Two hours after, she was insensible, and both doctors took possession of the sick-room. Madame Giraud, with their approval, attempted to join them, but she was thrust out of the room by Madame Bellais, who now seemed beside herself with grief. But the Duc insisted on her remaining in the dressing-room. Again and again did Lady Woodruff revive, but no one thought of leaving her bedside. She wandered sometimes, and even talked of meadows, hills, and of a father who was evidently much loved. The doctors listened. Gradually the pulse weakened, and they beckoned to the Duc, who was standing by a window, to approach the bed.

Before doing so, he motioned to an attendant who sat by his side to open the window. It was the one that Charles, his father's old valet, always opened, the one standing at which he always responded to the same question—"Any news yet, Charles? Any news?"

by the same answer—"It is early yet, Monseigneur, it is early yet."

The sun had just risen, and the fragrant earth was dewy with the mists of night. Birds were answering one another clearly, as though emulating the constant music of the fountains. The morning air seemed to revive Lady Woodruff, for she moved on her pillow. The Duc advanced to the bed, leaving the window without obstruction. He stood for the space of about five minutes by the bedside; then he saw his sister start from her pillow, and sitting up, stretch out her hands in the direction of the open window, and, with a countenance that expressed intense delight, exclaim, "Jack!"

He looked at the window, and then at his sister, but she had gone; she lay motionless, dead to this earth; away, away, with her husband.

For Jack, like an English gentleman, had kept his word.

Three hours later the servants at No. 4 received a short letter from Hewitt, telling them all he could—how my lady was a duchess, and such a grand one as was next a queen; how he was dressed in fine flummery; how my lady knew him but did not recognize Martha, and that he would write again in a day or two, as he thought my lady rather strange.

The excitement of the servants on reading this epistle was great, and they thought it incumbent upon them not only to visit the drawing-room and its pictures, but to order the Church bells to ring, "as is what Sir John would have done at once, as always treated my lady as a queen."

So while our Kitty lay smiling on her mother's bed in far off Verminoux, the bells of Folkestone rang again, as they had not rung since her wedding-day. And they did well, those gallant old bell-ringers, to do their best, for they rang for no earthly union, a union that can be dissolved by death; but they rang for that union that is for ever eternal, the union of wedded lovers

whom death has rejoined. There were no bride and bridegroom to whisper to one another in the vestry about the sweet sounds of the bells, on this their greater wedding-day, for both were in the far-off spirit land. They had passed over. They were away—Kitty, the last to go, had rejoined all those that loved her—she was among the blest.

> God has two families of love,
> One on earth and one above;
> One 'mid the battle's din and roar,
> And one at rest for evermore.

And they rang on and on, those dear old Folkestone bells. They told their listeners again and again that Kitty was married, that Kitty was Jack's! They told it all round Sugar Loaf, and then, fainter in their glee, told it to Caesar's Camp, and then on, but in a whisper only, to Summer House Hill.

But they did not tell the hills that Kitty was a duke's daughter. No! They said: "We ring our darling into Heaven!"

END OF NARRATIVE

CHAPTER XXVI

A SUMMING UP

Peace here; grace and good company.
—*Measure for Measure.*

THE morning after the funeral Madame Bellais returned to the chateau; she walked accompanied by the children. When about halfway up the avenue two carriages passed her. Their occupants, all gentlemen, bowed politely. Suspicious as to their business, our old friend quickened her steps. Capet was awaiting her on the terrace; he came forward evidently pleased at the information he was to give, and said, "M. le Duc requests the presence of madame in the library."

Madame Bellais gave him a sharp look.

"We have news then?"

"Yes, madame, I believe so."

Without a moment's hesitation, Marie joined the Duc.

He was standing by a table, on which was an open box; in his hands were several letters seemingly yellow with age.

"Marie!" he cried, "I present to you these gentlemen, representatives of the late Prince de Talleyrand. I need not introduce General Charon; he represents our hero Pierre We know all now. My father's dream was only too true. Look! Read! and then bring my niece to me, for she must share our joy."

Marie bowed to the strangers and gave her son's old

friend a hearty shake of the hand. She then scanned the letter the Duc gave her, giving vent, as she did so, to many exclamations of surprise. She glanced only at the contents of the box. Trembling with emotion, she said, " You are right, Lulu, she must be here among us! I will return quickly," and then left the room.

Madame Bellais knocked several times at Madame Giraud's door without receiving an answer; at last she entered, and found her on the point of awakening. Impulsively she bent over her, demanding pardon, and pleading for love, " for I love you now, my dear one, not only for your mother, but for your father."

Astonished, but grateful, Catherine Giraud accepted without hesitation the love proffered with such evident good faith. " Forgive you? Yes! I understand now so much more than I did. If you are lonely, what am I!" and she returned the kiss that her mother's old nurse gave her. " But what do you know of my dear father? Tell me quickly."

" Not much yet, my child, but enough to know that he was worthy of a demoiselle de Verminoux! Come, dress quickly, for we are all awaiting you in M. le Duc's library. Martha, dress your mistress!"

Shortly after, Madame Giraud left her room. She was surprised at finding Madame Bellais seated in the corridor. On joining her she said gently, " I want comforting, Marie! We will comfort one another!"

Tears rolled down Madame Bellais' cheeks, but she bravely tossed her head as she answered, " Courage, my child! Everything is for the best. Your mother is reunited with those she loved and I am left to welcome you. The Duc is impatient, come!"

Louis and Gabrielle were playing in the hall. On seeing Madame Giraud they ran to a table on which lay two beautiful bouquets, which they presented to her, at the same time wishing their " Aunt Catherine " good morning. Then they all entered the library.

It was seemingly crowded. Catherine saw her husband, flushed and happy; every member of the de Verminoux family was present, and several strangers. On a

table close to the Duc was an open wooden box. On seeing his niece he came forward to welcome her, saying, "My dear, we have no need to search, here are all the proofs, and, what is more, letters which explain all. Your dear mother's identity was discovered when she was a girl of sixteen, by M. le Prince de Talleyrand. Look! here is his letter to my father informing him of his discovery, and look, my dear, look!" And Madame Giraud read both the address, and the curt refusal to receive it written beneath.

She read out, apparently unconscious:—"Louis de Verminoux has not the pleasure of the acquaintance of Charles Maurice de Périgord de Talleyrand."

Stupefied, she looked inquiringly at the Duc.

"Then," she said, "the letter was never opened, so he never knew?"

"No," said the Duc. "My father's pride lost him his happiness; for the Prince, wounded as he had every reason to be, consulted some friends, two ladies and two gentlemen; they, after hearing the story he told them, in which he depicted your mother's happy English home, its worthy inmates, and the loving devotion of your gallant father, advised him to let her remain with those who had cherished her so tenderly; for they argued that your father, as a lover, could never be replaced. We will read the letter later on. Look! The dress your mother wore the day we lost her! Marie, dear friend, the past is speaking!" and he pointed to the white satin frock which Léonie de Verminoux held up for Madame Giraud's inspection. "I remember it only too well," he said sadly. "And look! Pierre's livery! The lace ruffles are gone! Where can they be?"

One of the strangers now came forward.

"I am present, M. le Duc, to answer that question. I was the late Prince's valet, and was commissioned by him to place on his heart, after death, a small packet. He told me that it contained a pair of lace ruffles stained with the blood of Madame la Duchesse de Verminoux, and, in the event of the mystery concerning the loss of Mademoiselle de Verminoux being unravelled and their

absence remarked upon, to inform the family that the missing articles were at Valency, upon the heart of its late owner." After saying this the man bowed, and resumed his position.

The Duc thanked him, and resumed : " Directly after receiving the advice before mentioned, the Prince sent for his lawyer and confided the box and this packet to his care, with a document explaining everything. However he nobly made one more advance to my father through Pierre Bellais, that should he wish the unopened letter it was still at his disposal. This last tentative was also unsuccessful, but, my dear, our loss was your mother's gain. And your husband, what of him ! He is the son of a hero, for the Prince writes of him too. Captain Léon Giraud gave his life for your father when he was condemned to be shot at Burgos. A Captain Rafferty, with whom the Prince had business transactions, and who was in his confidence, wrote to him asking his aid and influence with the Emperor to obtain the release of Captain Jack Woodruff. The Prince, accustomed to receive letters from this humble associate, on matters of but little importance, put the letter aside, and did not open it until a month or so after its reception. This delay was the cause of the tragedy, for though the Prince obtained the pardon requested, the messenger to whom it was entrusted arrived a few minutes too late—your husband's gallant father lay dead. Pierre, our great Marshal, was present. He, too, writes of him, and of the impossibility of your mother's discovery being made known to her family, as the shock might deprive her of her reason. It is all clear, my dear. But, standing as I do amid the family of which I am the chief, I can only wonder, and be thankful, for those wise counsellors, and for the strange manner in which all our hopes were realized. My sister remained with those who adopted her until they were no longer on this earth to deplore her loss. By a most extraordinary coincidence she returned to her native place as a visitor only, and herself discovered her lost home. We received her, Marie and I ; we keep her for ever with us. Dear ones," addressing his family, " we

are the richer by these additions to our family," here he took Giraud by one hand and his niece by the other. "None of us can claim nobler lineage. To-morrow, if my niece will permit me, accompanied by Madame Bellais, we will leave for Folkestone."

Two days after, on a glorious August afternoon, a carriage drove up to No. 4. Miles was by the open door, while the wondering servants stood expectant in the hall. Madame Giraud, who was sitting facing the Duc and Marie, bent forward as though intending to get out, but she was detained by a decisive pressure on her arm as Madame Bellais anticipated her, and, with the agility of a young woman, mounted the steps, and without hesitation walked through the hall, and passing the dining room entered the drawing room.

She gave one look at the pictures, and then with a countenance expressive of great happiness, rejoined the Duc.

"Lulu," she said, "Necker's daughter was right; to have deprived our child of such a lover would have been a crime." Then, with the air of an empress, to General Bellais, who had now joined the party:—"Explain to these worthy people, Louis, my pleasure at being among them, and that I too was her faithful loving servant, and that I thank them for the welcome that their predecessors gave my child!" And the indomitable old woman led the Duc to the drawing-room.

Speechless with admiration, he stood before the portraits of his sister and her husband. Hewitt, ever attentive, placed chairs, and suggested the advisability of their use, and so for half an hour the aged friends sat hand in hand, silent but not sorrowful. At last the Duc spoke.

"Marie, they welcome us in their youth and beauty; we should be happy to think that for a short time we, you and I, will live in the home they made so happy. Earthly joys have limitations, otherwise," pointing to the pictures, "they would have welcomed us. Masterpieces both," he murmured. To Madame Giraud, "but how sad your father looks, my dear."

Madame Giraud smiled. "Papa was so anxious when Mr. Lawrence painted him. He had always loved mamma, and he was not sure that his love was returned. He often laughed when he looked at his portrait, so did grandpapa; for quite two months grandpapa said he was jealous of him! But mamma loved both; she could not have lived without them, and this last six months she was only happy because she promised papa that she would be. Will you go to your rooms now? Marie, dear Marie, you are to have mamma's. Oh! if all my dear ones were here to welcome! All is so sad now!"

The Duc looked at his niece inquiringly, but said nothing.

What Marie felt like during the weeks she spent in Folkestone, would be difficult to describe. She lived in her child's past, and in interviews with Mr. Grey's successor, and when the narrative written by that pioneer of modern thought was produced, read and translated to her, with the other papers relating to "Kitty's" arrival, her wonder knew no bounds. Sitting by the tin box in which these documents had been kept, she, without thinking, put her hand in it, and finding a small packet took it out. On its being opened it was found to be a handsome snuffbox, which Madame Bellais recognized at once, as did the Duc.

Mr. Grey exclaimed, "Why, my father's snuffbox, given him by Admiral John Woodruff in memory of his brother George! We have hunted the house for it, and thought it must be lost." Addressing the Duc, "It has great interest, monsieur, as it was found in the Admiral's pocket after death."

The Duc bowed. "And, monsieur, it has great interest for me too, for it was presented to Admiral George by my late father. Look!" On the Duc's pressing a small gold knob, both sides of the box sprang open, exposing two beautiful miniatures—"my father and mother!" Then he added sadly, "Had your father shown this snuffbox to any jeweller the mystery of my sister's parentage would have been discovered at once.

See! her resemblance to her mother was extraordinary!'

But Marie smiled with approval, for, after death, Jack had made another conquest.

Once only did the bitterness of the past strike her, and that was when Mrs. Woodruff's treasures were gone over, and a certain drawer opened. Then, with the packet containing the golden curls in her hand, Marie did break down; and, mourning the irreclaimable past, she could not be comforted.

"She must have another interest," said Dr. Slateman.

One morning she joined the Duc in the smoking room, and said, "I have arranged with Madame Catherine what I think you will approve. This house is now desolate. Its masters are now among the blest. Their daughter has come to us, we represent her family now. She wishes you to take to Verminoux all that will recall her mother's happy English home—pictures, curios, arms, everything you care for. Being childless, Madame Catherine has no one to inherit her possessions; we, fortunately, hope that the House of Verminoux will continue to flourish. We shall glory in our English connections, and in the certainty that under our care all will be preserved, as the memories of their former owners, the gallant Admirals, will be revered and honoured."

The Duc acquiesced, saying, "Marie, I have talked the matter over with M. Giraud, and I intend building an addition to the Château, a 'Salle d' Honneur,' in which will be hung the portraits of the heroes and heroines of my family, and yours too, my beloved friend, for my sister's story would be incomplete did not your portrait, and those of your distinguished sons, appear among them."

Marie looked delighted, and continued:—"Madame Catherine hopes that we may all leave together, taking with us the family pictures. Being with her mother's family, she will feel the breaking up of her home less. Then," here Madame Bellais looked her old determined self, "I seem to feel that it is *their* wish. As they had our child living, so we have her daughter and all their

precious souvenirs, to guard for succeeding generations."

So it was arranged; and one November afternoon Catherine bade farewell to her father's home. With the Duc and Marie she passed through the hall, and, surrounded by old friends, passed the threshold of No. 4, for ever. She sat by her husband's side in the carriage, and smiled in a faint, heartbroken manner, as she addressed her companions—"I should be happy, for I have still three to love!"

And so she took her mother's place at Verminoux.

The Duc and Marie built their "Salle d' Honneur," and the interest it gave them lengthened their lives. It was a great day for them both when it was inaugurated, for then, surrounded by his family, and as many of his neighbours as could find standing room, the Duc told his sister's story. The termination of his speech was very beautiful and patriotic. "Dear friends, they were all heroes, but we, as French men and women, must be proud to know that the bravest and the noblest was a Frenchman!" And then he gave Giraud's toast:—"To the noblest and the bravest, be they French or English. Vive la France et l'Angleterre!"

Fifty years have rolled on since our story was told, and Folkestone is now "The Queen of Watering-places." The old church is still her crowning glory, but the bells that rang for Kitty's wedding, the bells whose mottoes were so quaint and pretty, ring no longer, for they have been replaced by new ones; and even we who love old Folkestone do not murmur at the change, for the song they tell the hills is the song of Angels and Archangels, and of the Just that have passed over:—

1. "Glory be to God on high.
2. "And on earth peace and goodwill to men.
3. "We praise Thee.
4. "We bless Thee.

5. "We worship Thee.
6. "We glorify Thee.
7. "We give thanks to Thee."

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